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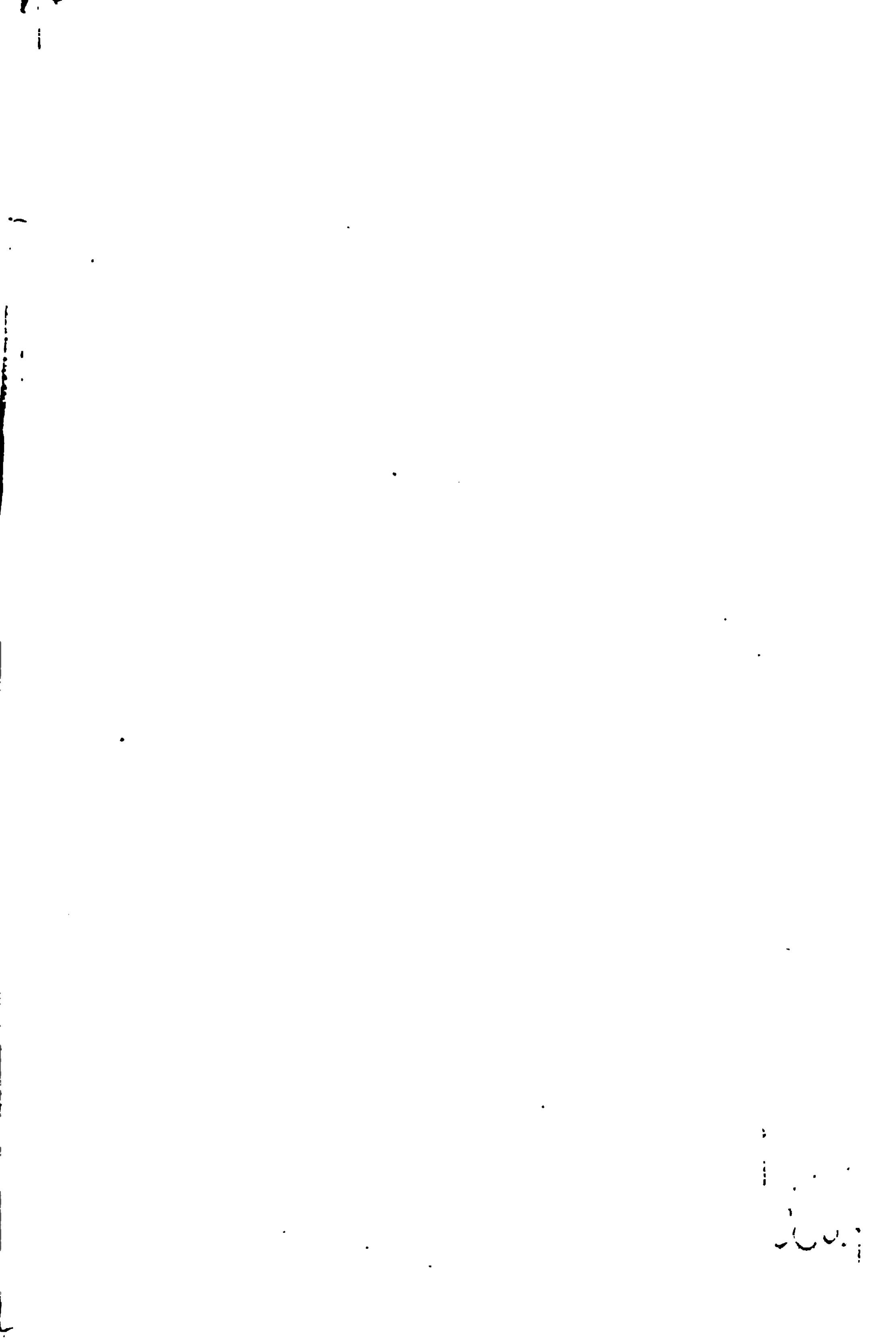
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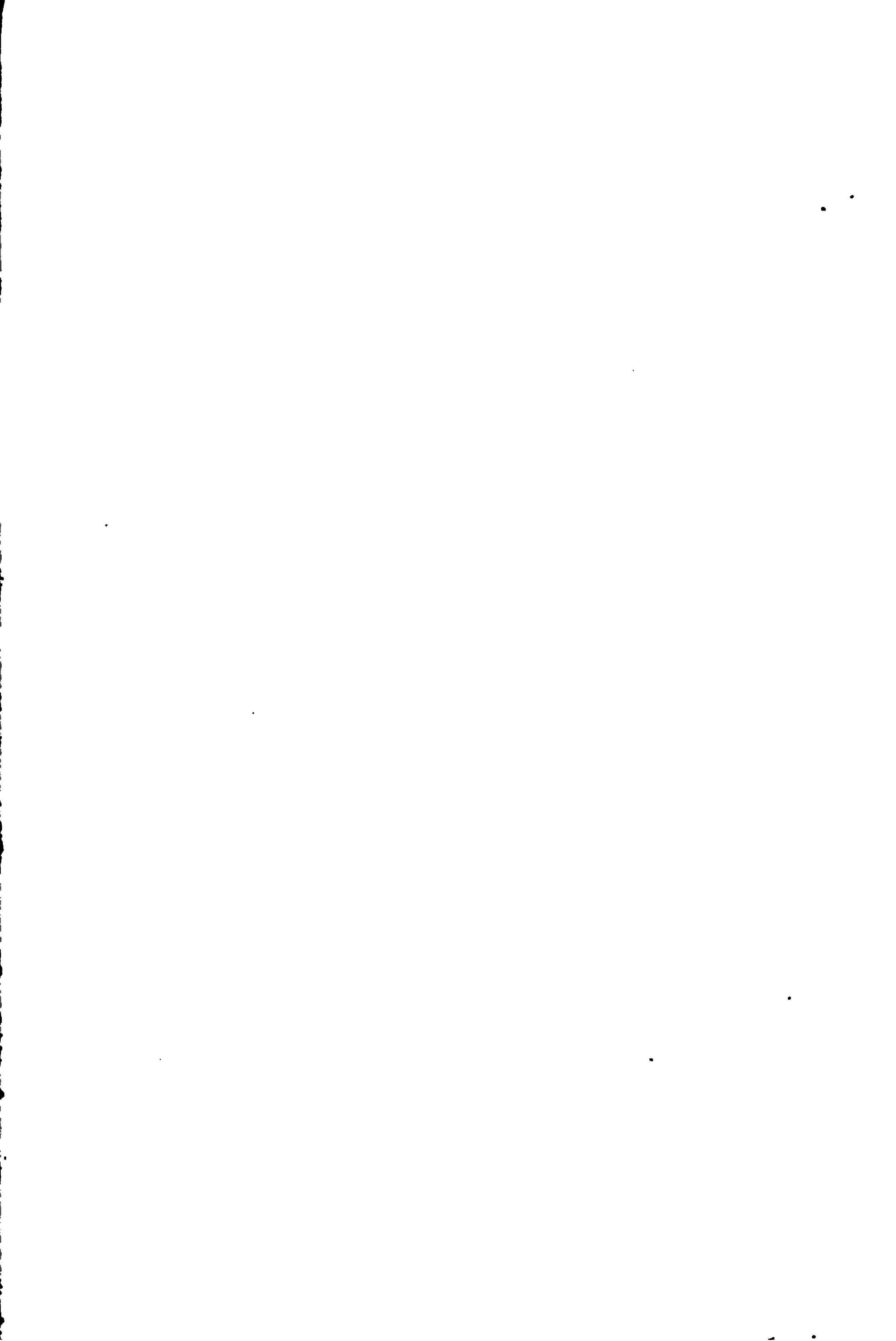
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THE BIRMINGHAM & MIDLAND
FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY





**THE CORRESPONDENCE OF
WILLIAM COWPER**

**THE CORRESPONDENCE OF
WILLIAM COWPER**

**ARRANGED IN CHRONOLOGICAL
ORDER, WITH ANNOTATIONS**

BY THOMAS WRIGHT

PRINCIPAL OF COWPER SCHOOL, OLNEY

AUTHOR OF 'THE LIFE OF WILLIAM COWPER,' ETC.

**IN FOUR VOLUMES
VOLUME IV**

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THE LETTERS OF WILLIAM COWPER

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL

Weston, November 1, 1790.

MY DEAR MR. BULL,—I thank you much for the communication of the enclosed, which I read with a tender remembrance of the days that are past, and felt much sympathy with the writer of it. If you have not already answered it, present our kindest love to him when you do.

I must trouble you to beg Mr. Greatheed, in Lady Hesketh's name, to return, if he has done with it, the book she lent him, sending it either to Olney or Weston, as may be most convenient to him. Griggs the butcher will take the charge of it.

Our best compliments attend yourself, Mrs. Bull, and your son. Let us see you when the weather will permit.—Yours ever, Wm. COWPER.

On November 7th died ‘John Thornton the Great.’ The elegy which Cowper wrote upon his death will be found in the Collected Poems.

TO MRS. BODHAM

Weston, November 21, 1790.

MY DEAR COZ,—Our kindness to your nephew is no more than he must entitle himself to wherever

he goes. His amiable disposition and manners will never fail to secure him a warm place in the affection of all who know him. The advice I gave respecting his poem on 'Audley End' was dictated by my love of him, and a sincere desire of his success. It is one thing to write what may please our friends, who, because they are such, are apt to be a little biassed in our favour; and another to write what may please every body; because they who have no connection, or even knowledge of the author, will be sure to find fault if they can. My advice, however salutary and necessary as it seemed to me, was such as I dared not have given to a poet of less diffidence than he. Poets are to a proverb irritable, and he is the only one I ever knew, who seems to have no spark of that fire about him. He has left us about a fortnight, and sorry we were to lose him; but had he been my son, he must have gone, and I could not have regretted him more. If his sister be still with you, present my love to her, and tell her how much I wish to see them at Weston together.

Mrs. Hewitt probably remembers more of my childhood, than I can recollect either of hers or my own; but this I recollect, that the days of that period were happy days, compared with most I have seen since. There are few perhaps in the world who have not cause to look back with regret on the days of infancy; yet, to say the truth, I suspect some deception in this. For infancy itself has its cares; and though we cannot now conceive how trifles could affect us much, it is certain that they did. Trifles they appear now, but such they were not then.

W. C.

TO MRS. BALLS,¹ CATFIELD, NORFOLK

Weston Underwood, Wednesday, Nov. 24, 1790.

MY DEAR COUSIN,—I shall love the turkeys the better for having procured me a letter from you, my old friend and playfellow in other days. We sent for them yesterday to the waggoner's house, in a village five miles off, and they arrived safe at Weston in the evening; safe, as I said, and in perfect health, as they desire me to tell you, and to thank you for your kind inquiries. They have also had a good night, have rested well, and feel themselves much refreshed; and will shortly be made acquainted with our premises,—for it is early at present, and they have not yet quitted their apartment. Mrs. Unwin, truly grateful, for your kindness in sending them, bids me present you her very best thanks and acknowledgments. Mine accompany hers, and we both long for the spring, that we may thank you here in person.

Your nephew,² whom I love as if he were my son, and who I believe is not unwilling to serve me in that capacity, since I am likely never to have any other, has left us, as you suppose, and is now at Cambridge. Yesterday I had a letter from him, in which he informs me that he has freed himself from all mathematical shackles; and after many frowns and many arguments from his tutor, has forsaken his unprofitable lectures, and betaken himself to others in the civil law. The consequence of this will be that instead of injuring

¹ Harriet, second daughter of the Rev. Roger Donne.

² Johnny of Norfolk.

his health and wasting his time in a study that could never have been of use to him, he will be able to take an eternal leave of Cambridge in May, and to pursue such studies at home as will be more suited to his future function. I am myself at the bottom of all this mischief; my evil counsels have perverted him. But I trust that neither I, nor he, nor his friends, will have any reason to regret it hereafter. Dr. Cheatham indeed is displeased; but that, I presume, is an affair of no great importance, compared with the irretrievable loss of some of the best years that a man can give to study,—a loss that he must have suffered had he continued to busy himself with squares and circles.

Do you consider, child, that when you call yourself an old woman, you make it impossible for me to be young? Know you not that it is forty years since we saw each other; that I was at that time at least two years older than you, and that, consequently, I continue to be so still? How then can you be old, when I, who am so much your elder have still, as Falstaff says, a smatch of my youth, and am almost as active as ever? Oh, when shall we ride in a whiskum snivel¹ again, and laugh as we have done heretofore? Should ever that day come, you must be the driver; for I have too great a value for your neck and my own to aspire to that office myself. I never excelled in it, and have hardly been in a whiskum since.

You have done wisely, I dare say, in selling your estate at Catfield;² but I should have been

¹ A name coined by Lady Hesketh for a gig—the old-fashioned gig, with bow springs.

² Norfolk.

glad would wisdom have permitted you to keep it: for of all places in the earth I love Catfield, and should then have had a chance of seeing it again.

Lady Hesketh will not allow that you are unknown to her, though you call yourself so. Have you forgotten how she threatened one evening to kill you, and how you verily believed that she intended it, and were frightened out of your wits? She, however, remembers it well; bids me present her best compliments to you, and assure you that she has laid aside all such murtherous intentions.

Adieu, my dear cousin. Let me hear from you as often as you can: and believe me with much affection, yours

W.M. COWPER.

TO JOHN JOHNSON

MY BIRTHDAY

Friday, Nov. 26, 1790.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,—I am happy that you have escaped from the claws of Euclid into the bosom of Justinian. It is useful I suppose to *every* man, to be well grounded in the principles of jurisprudence; and I take it to be a branch of science, that bids much fairer to enlarge the mind and give an accuracy of reasoning, than all the mathematics in the world. Mind your studies, and you will soon be wiser than I can hope to be.

We had a visit on Monday from one of the first women in the world; in point of character,

I mean, and accomplishments, the Dowager Lady Spencer! I may receive perhaps some honours hereafter, should my translation speed according to my wishes, and the pains I have taken with it; but shall never receive any that I shall esteem so highly. She is indeed worthy to whom I should dedicate, and may but my *Odyssey* prove as worthy of her, I shall have nothing to fear from the critics.—Yours, my dear Johnny, with much affection,

W. C.

TO MRS. KING

Weston Underwood, Nov. 29, 1790.

MY DEAR MADAM,—It has not been owing to any neglect of mine, that by my long silence I have reduced you to the necessity of concluding that your letter, enclosing that of Mr. Martyn, never reached me. The post brought them safe, and at the proper time; but an indisposition of the feverish kind, attended by a violent cough, seized me immediately after, and rendered me incapable of acknowledging the kindness both of your own letter and of Mr. Martyn's. All this was the effect of a cold, as you will suppose; and it proved the most obstinate that I ever had to deal with,—so obstinate that I have but just conquered it even by the aid of James's powder.

I value highly, as I ought and hope that I always shall, the favourable opinion of such men as Mr. Martyn: though to say the truth, their commendations, instead of making me proud, have rather a tendency to humble me, conscious as I am that I am over-rated. There is an old

piece of advice, given by an ancient poet and satirist, which it behoves every man, who stands well in the opinion of others, to lay up in his bosom:—*Take care to be, what you are reported to be.* By due attention to this wise counsel, it is possible to turn the praises of our friends to good account, and to convert that which might prove an incentive to vanity into a lesson of wisdom. I will keep your good and respectable friend's letter very safely, and restore it to you the first opportunity. I beg, my dear Madam, that you will present my best compliments to Mr. Martyn, when you shall either see him next or write to him.

To that gentleman's inquiries I am, doubtless, obliged for the recovery of no small proportion of my subscription-list; for in consequence of his application to Johnson, and very soon after it, I received from him no fewer than forty-five names, that had been omitted in the list he sent me, and that would probably never have been thought of more. No author, I believe, has a more inattentive or indolent bookseller: but he has every body's good word for liberality and honesty; therefore I must be content.

The press proceeds at present as well as I can reasonably wish. A month has passed since we began, and I revised this morning the first sheet of the sixth *Iliad*. Mrs. Unwin begs to add a line from herself, so that I have only room to subjoin my best respects to Mr. King, and to say that I am truly,—My dear Madam, yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

The Lodge, Nov. 30, 1790.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I will confess that I thought your letter somewhat tardy, though at the same time I made every excuse for you, except, as it seems, the right. *That* indeed was out of the reach of all possible conjecture. I could not guess that your silence was occasioned by your being occupied with either thieves or thief-takers. Since, however, the cause was such, I rejoice that your labours were not in vain, and that the freebooters, who had plundered your friend, are safe in limbo. I admire too, as much as I rejoice in your success, the indefatigable spirit that prompted you to pursue, with such unremitting perseverance, an object not to be reached but at the expense of infinite trouble, and that must have led you into an acquaintance with scenes and characters the most horrible to a mind like yours. I see in this conduct the zeal and firmness of your friendship to whomsoever professed; and though I wanted not a proof of it myself, contemplate so unequivocal an indication of what you really are, and of what I always believed you to be, with much pleasure. May you rise from the condition of an humble prosecutor, or witness, to the bench of judgment.

When your letter arrived, it found me with the worst and most obstinate cold that I ever caught. This was one reason why it had not a speedier answer. Another is, that except Tuesday morning, there is none in the week in which I am not engaged in the last revisal of my Translation;—the revisal I

mean of my proof-sheets. To this business I give myself with an assiduity and attention truly admirable, and set an example, which if other poets could be apprised of, they would do well to follow. Mis-carriages in authorship, I am persuaded, are as often to be ascribed to want of painstaking, as to want of ability.

Lady Hesketh, Mrs. Unwin, and myself, often mention you, and always in terms, that though you would blush to hear them, you need not be ashamed of; at the same time wishing much that you could change our trio into a quartetto. W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

Weston, Dec. 1, 1790.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—It is plain that you understand trap, as we used to say at school: for you begin with accusing me of long silence, conscious yourself at the same time that you have been half a year in my debt or thereabout. But I will answer your accusations with a boast of having intended many a day to write to you again, notwithstanding your long insolvency. Your brother and sister of Chicheley can both witness for me that, weeks since, I testified such an intention; and if I did not execute it, it was not for want of good will, but for want of leisure. When will you be able to glory of such designs, so liberal and magnificent,—you, who have nothing to do by your own confession but to grow fat and saucy? Add to all this, that I have had a violent cold, such as I never have but at the first approach of winter, and such as at that time

I seldom escape. A fever accompanied it, and an incessant cough.

You measure the speed of printers, of my printer at least, rather by your own wishes than by any just standard. Mine, I believe, is as nimble a one as falls to the share of poets in general, though not nimble enough to satisfy either the author or his friends. I told you that my work would go to press in autumn, and so it did. But it had been six weeks in London ere the press began to work upon it. About a month since we began to print, and at the rate of nine sheets in a fortnight have proceeded to about the middle of the sixth *Iliad*. ‘No further?’ you say. I answer—No, nor even so far, without much scolding on my part both at the bookseller and the printer. But courage, my friend! Fair and softly as we proceed, we shall find our way through at last; and in confirmation of this hope, while I write this, another sheet arrives. I expect to publish in the spring.

I love and thank you for the ardent desire you express to hear me bruited abroad, *et per ora virūm volitantem*. For your encouragement I will tell you that I read, myself at least, with wonderful complacence what I have done; and if the world, when it shall appear, do not like it as well as I, we will both say and swear with Fluellen,¹ that it is an ass and a fool (look you!) and a prating coxcomb.

I felt no ambition of the laurel. Else, though vainly perhaps, I had friends who would have made a stir on my behalf on that occasion.² I confess that when I learned the new condition of the office,

¹ See Shakespeare's *Henry V*.

² Thomas Warton, the poet-laureate, died 21st May 1790.

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that odes were no longer required, and that the salary was increased, I felt not the same dislike of it. But I could neither go to court, nor could I kiss hands, were it for a much more valuable consideration. Therefore never expect to hear that royal favours find out me!

Adieu, my dear old friend! I will send you a mortuary copy soon, and in the mean time remain,
—Ever yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

Dec. 5, 1790.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Sometimes I am too sad, and sometimes too busy, to write. Both these causes have concurred lately to keep me silent. But more than by either of these I have been hindered, since I received your last, by a violent cold, which oppressed me during almost the whole month of November.

You letter affected us with both joy and sorrow: with sorrow and sympathy respecting poor Mrs. Newton,¹ whose feeble and dying state suggests a wish for her release, rather than for her continuance; and joy on your account, who are enabled to bear, with so much resignation and cheerful acquiescence in the will of God, the prospect of a loss, which even they who know you best apprehended might prove too much for you. As to Mrs. Newton's interest in the best things, none, intimately acquainted with her as we have been, could doubt it. She doubted it indeed herself; but though it is not our duty to doubt, any more than it is our privilege, I have always considered the self-condemning spirit, to

¹ Mrs Newton died 15th December 1790.

which such doubts are principally owing, as one of the most favourable symptoms of a nature spiritually renewed, and have many a time heard you make the same observation.

TO JOHN JOHNSON

Weston, Dec. 18, 1790.

I PERCEIVE myself so flattered by the instances of illustrious success mentioned in your letter, that I feel all the amiable modesty, for which I was once so famous, sensibly giving way to a spirit of vain-glory.

The King's College subscription makes me proud; the effect that my verses have had on your two young friends, the mathematicians, makes me proud; and I am, if possible, prouder still of the contents of the letter that you enclosed.

You complained of being stupid, and sent me one of the cleverest letters. I have not complained of being stupid, and have sent you one of the dullest. But it is no matter; I never aim at any thing above the pitch of every day's scribble, when I write to those I love.

Homer proceeds, my boy! We shall get through it in time, and I hope, by the time appointed. We are now in the tenth *Iliad*. I expect the ladies every minute to breakfast. You have their best love; mine attends the whole army of Donnes at Mattishall Green assembled. How happy should I find myself, were I but one of the party! My capering days are over;—But

do you caper for me, that you may give them some idea of the happiness I should feel were I in the midst of them !

W. C.

TO WALTER CHURCHEY,
ATTORNEY AT LAW, HAY, BRECON

Weston Underwood, Dec. 24, 1790.

DEAR SIR,—You know my occupation, and will be more charitable, I trust, than to impute to negligence my tardiness in replying to your obliging letters.

I have much to thank you for. Imprimis for your remarks on the specimen, which, I dare say, were favourable enough to me. I know not if they have been published according to your desire, but I apprehend that Johnson, who is my factotum in everything that relates to Homer, may have judged it to be rather too late in the day to print a commentary on that passage now, which was itself printed five years ago, and which the critics have already mumbled.

I thank you also for the respectable names which you have procured me, and have added them to my catalogue.

To say that I was grieved at the treatment you have received from the Reviewers is saying little, for I felt myself not more grieved than angry. To censure a book in that general manner is neither just to the author of it, nor satisfactory to their own readers. Extracts should always be given; first, as a proof that they have read what they condemn, and, secondly, that the public may judge for themselves.

I sent your publisher's address to Johnson, and directed *him* to send me your volume; but though he is a sensible man, and an honest one, I have not a few reasons to suspect that he is rather indolent, and to that cause ascribe it that I have never yet had the pleasure you intended me. Should it be convenient to you to order your own bookseller to send it by the Olney waggon, I shall be sure of it. The waggon will be found at the Windmill, St. John Street, Smithfield.

I never feel myself poor but when I see or hear of a valuable man whose exigencies exceed my ability to relieve them. How heartily and gladly I would administer to the complete removal of yours were it in my power, God knows.—I am, dear Sir, with much respect, your obliged humble servant,

Wm. COWPER.

You may tell your friends that my work is in the press, and will be published in the spring.

TO DR. GLYNN OF CAMBRIDGE¹

Weston Underwood near Olney, Bucks
25 Dec. 1790.

MY DEAR DOCTOR,—Not to send you a line to thank you for the kindness you have shown me in subscribing to my work yourself, and procuring me other names that will reflect so much honour on the publication, would be an omission that I could never forgive myself. I do most heartily thank you for all that you have spoken of me, and all that you

¹ This letter is in the possession of the Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, who most kindly forwarded the copy.

have done for me, having learned it minutely from my young cousin of Caius.¹ This kindness of an old friend both of my brother's and mine has touched me too nearly not to be noticed, or ever to be forgotten.

My translation is in the Press, as you have doubtless been informed, and we have arrived in an impression at the middle of the eleventh book of the *Iliad*, yet I want a better spur than I am master of to prick the printer forward. Such folks are the slowest of all that are slow, and the rogue takes the advantage of my living almost sixty miles off in the country; but we shall publish, I trust, in the spring, at least by the opening of the first roses.

I have found this work, laborious as it has been, during the five years a perpetual source of amusement to me, and of amusement so delightful that I despair of ever stumbling on the like again. My only want has been some fine old Grecian in my neighbourhood whom I might have occasionally consulted, and who would have enjoyed my author with me. Oh that you had been at hand yourself to have acted in that capacity.

Remember me kindly to the good Master of Benet,² thanking him heartily for his name on this occasion.—And believe me, my dear doctor, truly and affectionately yours, Wm. COWPER.

You have obliged me much by your kind notice of my cousin Johnson, and I am happy to add that you will find him not unworthy of your encouragement. He spent a part of the summer and all the autumn with me, and I can affirm from a thorough

¹ John Johnson.

² Benet College, now Corpus Christi College.

knowledge of him, that there is nothing amiable either in temper or manners that I have not found in him.

TO MRS. KING

Weston Underwood, Dec. 31, 1790.

MY DEAR MADAM,—Returning from my walk at half-past three, I found your welcome messenger in the kitchen; and entering the study, found also the beautiful present with which you had charged him. We have all admired it, (for Lady Hesketh was here to assist us in doing so); and for my own particular, I return you my sincerest thanks, a very inadequate compensation. Mrs. Unwin, not satisfied to send you thanks only, begs your acceptance likewise of a turkey, which, though the figure of it might not much embellish a counterpane, may possible serve hereafter to swell the dimensions of a feather-bed.

I have lately been visited with an indisposition much more formidable than that which I mentioned to you in my last,—a nervous fever; a disorder to which I am subject, and which I dread above all others, because it comes attended by a melancholy perfectly insupportable. This is the first day of my complete recovery, the first in which I have perceived no symptoms of my terrible malady; and the only drawback on this comfort that I feel is the intelligence contained in yours, that neither Mr. King nor yourself are well. I dread always, both for my own health and for that of my friends, the unhappy influences of a year worn out. But, my dear madam, this is the last day of it; and I resolve to hope that the new year shall obliterate

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all the disagreeables of the old one. I can wish nothing more warmly than that it may prove a propitious year to you.

My poetical operations, I mean of the occasional kind, have lately been pretty much at a stand. I told you, I believe, in my last, that Homer, in the present stage of the process, occupied me more intensely than ever. He still continues to do so, and threatens, till he shall be completely finished, to make all other composition impracticable. I have, however, written the mortuary verses as usual; but the wicked clerk for whom I write them has not yet sent me the impression. I transmit to you the long-promised *Catharina*;¹ and were it possible that I could transcribe the others, would send them also. There is a way, however, by which I can procure a frank, and you shall not want them long.

With Mrs. Unwin's best compliments to yourself and Mr. King, together with our joint wishes for his and your complete recovery,—I remain, dearest Madam, ever yours,

Wm. COWPER.

P.S.—(In Lady Hesketh's handwriting.)—Lady Hesketh, though unknown, desires to present her compliments and best wishes to the good and amiable friend of her dear cousin.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

Weston, Jan. 4, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—You would long since have received an answer to your last, had not the wicked

¹ *Globe Ed.*, p. 315.

clerk of Northampton delayed to send me the printed copy of my annual dirge, which I waited to enclose. Here it is at last, and much good may it do the readers!

I have regretted that I could not write sooner, especially because it well became me to reply as soon as possible to your kind enquiries after my health, which has been both better and worse since I wrote last. The cough was cured, or nearly so, when I received your letter, but I have lately been afflicted with a nervous fever, a malady formidable to me above all others, on account of the terror and dejection of spirits that in my case always accompany it. I even looked forward, for this reason, to the month now current, with the most miserable apprehensions, for in this month the distemper has twice seized me. I wish to be thankful however to the sovereign Dispenser both of health and sickness, that, though I have felt cause enough to tremble, He gives me now encouragement to hope that I may dismiss my fears, and expect, for this January at least, to escape it.

The mention of quantity reminds me of a remark that I have seen somewhere, possibly in Johnson, to this purport,—that the syllables in our language being neither long nor short, our verse accordingly is less beautiful than the verse of the Greeks or Romans, because requiring less artifice in its construction. But I deny the fact, and am ready to depose on oath, that I find every syllable as distinguishably and clearly either long or short, in our language, as in any other. I know also that without an attention to the quantity of our syllables, good verse cannot possibly be written; and that

ignorance of this matter is one reason why we see so much that is good for nothing. The movement of a verse is always either shuffling or graceful, according to our management in this particular, and Milton gives almost as many proofs of it in his *Paradise Lost* as there are lines in the poem. Away therefore with all such unfounded observations! I would not give a farthing for many bushels of them,—nor you perhaps for this letter. Yet upon recollection, forasmuch as I know you to be a dear lover of literary gossip, I think it possible you may esteem it highly.

Believe me, my dear friend, most truly yours,
W. C.

TO JOSEPH JOHNSON (BOOKSELLER)

I DID not write the line,¹ that has been tampered with, hastily, or without due attention to the construction of it; and what appeared to me its only merit is, in its present state, entirely annihilated.

I know that the ears of modern verse-writers are delicate to an excess, and their readers are troubled with the same squeamishness as themselves. So that if a line do not run as smooth as quicksilver they are offended. A critic of the present day serves a poem as a cook serves a dead turkey, when she fastens the legs of it to a post, and draws out all the sinews. For this we may thank Pope; but unless we could imitate him in the closeness and

¹ Some reviser had taken the liberty to alter a line in one of Cowper's poems.

compactness of his expression, as well as in the smoothness of his numbers, we had better drop the imitation, which serves no other purpose than to emasculate and weaken all we write. Give me a manly, rough line, with a deal of meaning in it, rather than a whole poem full of musical periods, that have nothing but their oily smoothness to recommend them!

I have said thus much, as I hinted in the beginning, because I have just finished a much longer poem than the last, which our common friend will receive by the same messenger that has the charge of this letter. In that poem there are many lines, which an ear, so nice as the gentleman's who made the above-mentioned alteration, would undoubtedly condemn ; and yet (if I may be permitted to say it) they cannot be made smoother without being the worse for it. There is a roughness on a plum, which nobody that understands fruit would rub off, though the plum would be much more polished without it. But lest I tire you, I will only add, that I wish you to guard me from all such meddling ; assuring you, that I always write as smoothly as I can ; but that I never did, never will, sacrifice the spirit or sense of a passage to the sound of it.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

Jan. 20, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Had you been a man of this world, I should have held myself bound, by the law of ceremonies, to have sent you long since my tribute of condolence. I have sincerely mourned

with you ; and though you have lost a wife, and I only a friend, yet do I understand too well the value of such a friend as Mrs. Newton, not to have sympathised with you very nearly. But you are not a man of this world ; neither can you, who have both the Scripture and the Giver of Scripture to console you, have any need of aid from others, or expect it from such spiritual imbecility as mine. I considered, likewise, that receiving a letter from Mrs. Unwin, you, in fact, received one from myself, with this difference only, that hers could not fail to be better adapted to the occasion, and to your own frame of mind, than any that I could send you.

You are now, long as it is since I wrote, the first of my correspondents to whom I write, though I am actually in arrear to all. The reason of my insolvency would probably obtrude upon you, even if I did not mention it ; but, in justice to myself, it is necessary for me to say, that in the present stage of my long work, my two great volumes being now in the press, I find letter-writing a difficulty, and indeed almost impracticable. As fast as proof-sheets arrive, which is almost by every post, I am called to consider, for the last time, every line before me with the most exact attention, that the whole may be prepared to meet the eye of the public and critical scrutiny, which I have reason enough to expect will examine me with all the zeal that an ambition to find fault inspires. This state of the matter renders the closest application necessary, and equally necessary it will continue to be,—

Cætera desunt.

TO JOHN JOHNSON

Weston, Jan. 21, 1791.

I KNOW that you have already been catechized by Lady Hesketh on the subject of your return hither before the winter shall be over, and shall therefore only say that, if you *can come*, we shall be happy to receive you. Remember also that nothing can excuse the nonperformance of a promise, but absolute necessity! In the mean time my faith in your veracity is such, that I am persuaded you will suffer nothing less than necessity to prevent it. Were you not extremely pleasant to us, and just the sort of youth that suits us, we should neither of us have said half so much, or perhaps a word on the subject.

Yours, my dear Johnny, are vagaries that I shall never see practised by any other; and whether you slap your ankle, or reel as if you were fuddled, or dance in the path before me, all is characteristic of yourself, and therefore to me delightful. I have hinted to you indeed sometimes, that you should be cautious of indulging antic habits and singularities of all sorts, and young men in general have need enough of such admonition. But yours are a sort of fairy habits, such as might belong to Puck or Robin Goodfellow, and therefore, good as the advice is, I should be half sorry should you take it.

This allowance at least I give you: continue to take your walks, if walks they may be called, exactly in their present fashion, till you have taken orders. Then indeed, forasmuch as a skipping, curveting, bounding divine might be a spectacle not altogether

seemly, I shall consent to your adoption of a more grave demeanour.

W. C.

TO CLOTWORTHY ROWLEY

Feb. 1, 1791.

You must know, my dear Rowley, that a man having two great volumes in the press is no more master of his time than the greatest man in the kingdom, and therefore, that though I have somewhat delayed my answer, I am clear of the charge to which you plead guilty, the charge of procrastination.

Your expectations that my Homer — or *our* Homer as you kindly call it — will appear in the middle of this month, it is to be hoped are not very sanguine, because in proportion as they are such you will infallibly be disappointed. Not that I have lately had cause to complain of the printer. He proceeds, leisurely indeed, but regularly, and which is still better, very correctly. But it is a bulky business, and will not be accomplished, I presume, till the spring is nearly over. We are now in the eighteenth *Iliad*. Burke's pamphlet stood in my way when I wrote last; for every press, and consequently mine, groaned with answers to it, so that the old Grecian and his not very young translator were sorely neglected.

You have not, I hope, lost your catalogue of subscribers' names, and you will not, I hope, forget to send them time enough to be inserted in the volume. It will be worth your while to attend to this matter, for as sure as you live if I get them not, I will chronicle them in the last edition of the list by

the style and title of *Sixteen Irish, names and sex unknown*. Unless you wish us, therefore, a laugh at the expense of your present countrymen, I recommend it to you by all means to send them in your next letter, and not to suffer that next letter to be very long in arrear. To tell you a sober truth, I should have been glad to have received them sooner, had it consisted with your procrastinating moods to have sent them; for the first edition of my list is published this very day, annexed to the *Analytical Review*, and their appearance in it would have gratified me and would have done me honour; would have helped likewise to decoy others, which is the view with which this present list is published.

I rejoice that you look so young. I too, I believe, am older than I seem, or the ladies flatter me; and why they should, I know not, for I have long since ceased to be worthy of so much favour and goodness at their delicate hands. I would with all my heart that you were not still accompanied by the rheumatism, after so many years cohabitation; but it is better than the gout, and we must have something. *Felicissimus ille qui minimis urgetur.*

I can assure you, my dear old friend, that a journey from Bath hither is not like a journey to the world's end; and the next time you visit the nymph of that spring, I shall hope that you will make the experiment. There is no creature whom I should receive with more true pleasure, for I am most affectionately yours,

Wm. COWPER.

Is it possible that you should know anything of a Mr. Kellet, a banker at Cork, and, as I understand, in some sort a relation of mine?

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON

The Lodge, Feb. 2, 1791.

MY DEAR MRS. FROG,—Tom and Tit are in perfect health. Either Lady Hesketh or I have seen them daily since you went. He gave my cousin yesterday a sprig of box, desiring her in *his* way to give it to Toot as a present from himself, on which occasion, Toot, seized with a fit of poetic enthusiasm said or seemed to say :

Dear Tom ! my muse this moment sounds your praise
And turns, at once, your sprig of box to bays.

No other news has occurred at Weston, none at least has reached me, except that the long unseen Joe Rye¹ called yesterday. I made my cousin a present of his company for near two hours, when he and I set forth to walk together, he in his great-coat and boots, and I great-coated and in my boots also. We had a very agreeable tour to Dinglederry and over the hill into Hoebrook valley. Agreeable I mean as it could be while the wind blew a hurricane and the hail pelted us without mercy. But Joe is fond of a high wind, so at least he assured me, and if he does but like hailstones as well he must have supposed himself in paradise.

We have had nothing but high winds ever since you left us. It must have been on some such stormy season as the present that the following beautiful lines were produced. Did you ever see them, and whose are they ?—

‘Such was the agitation of the deep
That even a fish did wish a sleeping potion,

¹ Rev. Joseph Jekyll Rye.

And yawning said, one drop to make me sleep,
Were now, methinks, worth all this troubled ocean.

The sprats were bulged against the rocks and split ;
The whales with broken tails were cast away,
And every lobster's shell did lose a bit,
And crabs, in vain, with all their claws, gripped hard the
bottom clay.'

It is impossible that I should follow this singular description of a storm at sea, the sublimity of which I must needs envy the poet who wrote it, with anything worthy your notice. I shall therefore conclude with my best love to Mr. Frog, and with the ladies' best compliments, and am most truly yours,

W.M. COWPER alias W. Toot.¹

TO SAMUEL ROSE

The Lodge, Feb. 5, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—My letters to you are all either petitionary, or in the style of acknowledgments and thanks, and such nearly in an alternate order. In my last, I loaded you with commissions, for the due discharge of which I am now to say, and say truly, how much I feel myself obliged to you, neither can I stop there, but must thank you likewise for new honours from Scotland, which have left me nothing to wish for from that country; for my list is now I believe graced with the subscription of all its learned bodies. I regret only that some of them arrived too late to do honour to my present publication of names, but there are those among them, and from Scotland too, that may give a useful

¹ See footnote to Letter of 31st Oct. 1790.

hint perhaps to our own universities. All these with many others I owe to you, and should we balance the account of obligation (for you lately spoke highly of yours to me), it would be found, I believe, that I am much your debtor. Your very handsome present of Pope's Homer has arrived safe, notwithstanding an accident that befel him by the way. The Hall servant brought the parcel from Olney, resting it on the pommel of the saddle, and his horse fell with him. Pope was in consequence rolled in the dirt, but being well coated got no damage. If augurs and soothsayers were not out of fashion, I should have consulted one or two of that order in hope of learning from them that this fall was ominous. I have found a place for him on the chiffonier in the parlour, where he makes a splendid appearance, and where he shall not long want a neighbour, one who, if less popular than himself, shall at least look as big as he.

Johnson was not mistaken in the judgment he formed of the *Odyssey*, and I was. I had supposed it more finished, than when I had received the copy again I found it. I could not have believed him chargeable with the fault of a too frequent and sometimes a too violent inversion and contortion of syntax, nor can Johnson account for its being so, and for my own blindness to that blemish, than by supposing myself, after such long and close study of the original, infected to the very bone with the Grecian manner of misarrangement. In other respects I verily think I have executed this work well; and that in this respect also it may merit at least my own good opinion, I am now busy in delivering it from all possibility of such

objection; in which lost labour I have proceeded as far as to the seventh book. How has it happened that since Pope did certainly dedicate both *Iliad* and *Odyssey* no dedication is found in this first edition of them?

You know I presume, having seen William, that the Throckmortons are in town. They are to be found at No. 11 New Burlington Street. Our ladies, seeing that you are now a husband, take courage and send their love to you. Our best compliments attend Mrs. Rose also.—I am, truly yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH

Feb. 13, 1791.

I CAN now send you a full and true account of this business. Having learned that your inn at Woburn was the George, we sent Samuel thither yesterday. Mr. Martin, master of the George, told him

[Here follows the account of a servant's cruelty to a post-horse.]

W. C.

P.S.—I cannot help adding a circumstance that will divert you. Martin, having learned from Sam whose servant he was, told him that he had never seen Mr. Cowper, but he had heard him frequently spoken of by the companies that had called at his house, and therefore, when Sam would have paid for his breakfast, would take nothing from him. Who says that fame is only empty breath? On the contrary, it is good ale, and cold beef into the bargain.

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON

The Lodge, Feb. 19, 1791.

MY DEAR MRS. FROG,—I will be very good to you and will send you a letter, though you delay so long to answer my last, and to tell me who was the author of the fine verses I sent you lately, and how much you admire them.

I was in hope that by this time you would have won your ten guineas at commerce, and have flown upon the wings of good fortune back to Weston; methinks you are a long time about it, but if you have not won so much, I hope at least that you have taken care not to lose it; as for me I grow rich, and have at this three guineas before me which my poetry, such is its power of attraction, has drawn into my desk from the distance of three miles and a half. I question if Orpheus ever performed such a feat in his life. It is Mr. Wrighte's subscription money to my Homer, which he sent me the other day by the hands of Joe Rye, by whom he told me also that he should have paid me much sooner had he not feared to offend my delicacy. Now I wish him to know that my delicacy is never offended by the receipt of money: on the contrary, I esteem the want of money, commonly called Poverty, the most indelicate thing in the world; and so did the ancient Romans, who therefore always annex to the word paupertas, an epithet expressing their abhorrence of it, such, for instance, as squalida, or sordida, or some such reproachful appellation.

But it was not with an intention to say this or

any part of this at present. I meant only to relate to you a pretty little story of Tom, for I know it will do your heart good to hear it. You will remember, perhaps, if you have not forgotten in the hurry of other matters, that you lately sent a gown to be made at Weston. Nannie Morley carried it to the nursery, and being seated there said—‘Tom,’ or ‘Master Gifford’ rather, ‘this is your aunt’s gown.’ Which he no sooner heard, than walking up to it and taking a fold of it, he kissed it. I made the doctor swear that he would not tell this anecdote, because I resolved to have the pleasure of telling it to you myself.

Give my best love to Mr. Frog, and my compliment to Messrs. Cruisé and Pitcairne when you see them, and believe me sincerely, yours,

Wm. COWPER.

Tom and Tit are both in good health. Mrs. W. sends her best respects. Remember me to William.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

Weston Underwood, Feb. 26, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is a maxim of much weight,
Worth conning o'er and o'er,
He who has Homer to translate,
Had need do nothing more.

BUT notwithstanding the truth and importance of this apophthegm, to which I lay claim as the original author of it, it is not equally true that my application to Homer, close as it is, has been the sole cause of my delay to answer you. No.

In observing so long a silence I have been influenced much more by a vindictive purpose,—a purpose to punish you for your suspicion that I could possibly feel myself hurt or offended by any critical suggestion of yours, that seemed to reflect on the purity of my nonsense verses. Understand, if you please, for the future, that whether I disport myself in Greek or Latin, or in whatsoever other language, you are hereby, henceforth, and for ever, entitled and warranted to take any liberties with it, to which you shall feel yourself inclined, not excepting even the lines themselves which stand at the head of this letter.

You delight me when you call *blank* verse the English *heroic*; for I have always thought, and often said, that we have no other verse worthy to be so entitled. When you read my Preface you will be made acquainted with my sentiments on this subject pretty much at large; for which reason I will curb my zeal, and say the less about it at present. That Johnson, who wrote harmoniously in rhyme, should have had so defective an ear as never to have discovered any music at all in blank verse, till he heard a particular friend of his reading it, is a wonder never sufficiently to be wondered at. Yet this is true on his own acknowledgment, and amounts to a plain confession, (of which perhaps he was not aware when he made it,) that he did not know how to read blank verse himself. In short, he either suffered prejudice to lead him in a string whithersoever it would, or his taste in poetry was worth little. I don't believe he ever read any thing of that kind with enthusiasm in his life; and as good poetry cannot be composed with-

out a considerable share of that quality in the mind of the author, so neither can it be read or tasted as it ought to be without it.

I have said all this in the morning fasting, but am soon going to my tea. When therefore I shall have told you that we are now, in the course of our printing, in the second book of the *Odyssey*, I shall only have time to add, that I am, my dear friend, most truly yours,

W. C.

I think your Latin quotations very applicable to the present state of France. But France is in a situation new and untried before.

TO JOHN JOHNSON

Feb. 27, 1791.

Now, my dearest Johnny, I must tell thee in few words how much I love and am obliged to thee for thy affectionate services.

My Cambridge honours are all to be ascribed to you, and to you only. Yet you are but a little man; and a little man into the bargain who have kicked the mathematics, their idol, out of your study. So important are the endings which Providence frequently connects with small beginnings. Had you been here, I could have furnished you with much employment; for I have so dealt with your fair MSS. in the course of my polishing and improving, that I have almost blotted out the whole. Such however as it is, I must now send it to the printer, and he must be content with it, for there is not time to make a fresh copy. We are now printing the second book of the *Odyssey*.

Should the Oxonians bestow none of their notice on me on this occasion, it will happen singularly enough, that as Pope received all his university honours in the subscription way from Oxford, and none at all from Cambridge, so I shall have received all mine from Cambridge, and none from Oxford. This is the more likely to be the case, because I understand that on whatsoever occasion either of those learned bodies thinks fit to move, the other always makes it a point to sit still, thus proving its superiority.

I shall send up your letter to Lady Hesketh in a day or two, knowing that the intelligence contained in it will afford her the greatest pleasure. Know likewise for your own gratification, that all the Scotch universities have subscribed, none excepted.

We are all as well as usual; that is to say, as well as reasonable folks expect to be on the crazy side of this frail existence.

I rejoice that we shall so soon have you again at our fireside.

W. C.

TO MRS. KING

Weston Underwood, March 2, 1791.

DEAREST MADAM,—I am sick and ashamed of myself that I forgot my promise; but it is actually true that I did forget it. You, however, I did not forget; nor did I forget to wonder and to be alarmed at your silence, being myself perfectly unconscious of my arrears. All this, together with various other trespasses of mine, must be set down to the account of Homer; and wherever he

is, he is bound to make his apology to all my correspondents, but to you in particular. True it is, that if Mrs. Unwin did not call me from that pursuit, I should forget, in the ardour with which I persevere in it, both to eat and drink and retire to rest. This zeal has increased in me regularly as I have proceeded, and in an exact ratio, as a mathematician would say, to the progress I have made toward the point at which I have been aiming. You will believe this, when I tell you, that, not contented with my previous labours, I have actually revised the whole work, and have made a thousand alterations in it, since it has been in the press. I have now, however, tolerably well satisfied myself at least, and trust that the printer and I shall trundle along merrily to the conclusion. I expect to correct the proof-sheets of the third book of the *Odyssey* to-day.

Thus it is, as I believe I have said to you before, that you are doomed to hear of nothing but Homer from me. There is less of gallantry than of nature in this proceeding. When I write to you, I think of nothing but the subject that is uppermost, and that uppermost is always Homer. Then I consider that though, as a lady, you have a right to expect other treatment at my hands, you are a lady who has a husband, and that husband an old schoolfellow of mine, and who, I know, interests himself in my success.

I am likely, after all, to gather a better harvest of subscribers at Cambridge than I expected. A little cousin of mine, an undergraduate of Caius College, suggested to me, when he was here in the summer, that it might not be amiss to advertise

the work at Merrill's the bookseller. I acquiesced in the measure; and at his return he pasted me on a board, and hung me in the shop, as it has proved in the event, much to my emolument. For many, as I understand, have subscribed in consequence, and among the rest several of the public libraries.

I am glad that you have seen the last Northampton dirge, for the rogue of a clerk sent me only half the number of printed copies for which I stipulated with him at first, and they were all expended immediately. The poor man himself is dead now; and whether his successor will continue me in my office, or seek another laureate, has not yet transpired.

I began with being ashamed, and I must end with being so. I am ashamed that, when I wrote by your messenger, I omitted to restore to you Mr. Martyn's letter: but it is safe and shall be yours again. I am sorry that you have suffered so much this winter by your old complaint the rheumatism. We shall both, I hope, be better in a better season, now not very distant; for I have never myself been free from my fever since the middle of January; neither do I expect to be released till summer shall set me free.

I am, my dear Madam, with Mrs. Unwin's best compliments to yourself and Mr. King, affectionately yours,

Wm. COWPER.

Lady Hesketh has left us about a month.

TO JOSEPH HILL

Weston, March 6, 1791.

AFTER all this ploughing and sowing on the plains of Troy, once fruitful, such at least to my translating predecessor, some harvest I hope will arise for me also. My long work has received its last, last touches ; and I am now giving my preface its final adjustment. We are in the fourth *Odyssey* in the course of our printing, and I expect that I and the swallows shall appear together. They have slept all the winter, but I, on the contrary, have been extremely busy. Yet if I can *virum volitare per ora* as swiftly as they through the air, I shall account myself well requited. Adieu !

W. C.

Among those who acknowledged their indebtedness to Cowper was the Rev. James Hurdis, author of *The Village Curate*. Having addressed a letter to Weston, Mr Hurdis obtained the following in reply :—

TO THE REV. JAMES HURDIS

Weston, March 6, 1791.

SIR,—I have always entertained, and have occasionally avowed, a great degree of respect for the abilities of the unknown author of *The Village Curate*, unknown at that time, but now well known, and not to me only, but to many. For before I was favoured with your obliging letter, I knew your name, your place of abode, your profession, and that you had four sisters ; all which I learned neither from our bookseller, nor

from any of his connections; you will perceive therefore that you are no longer an author *incognito*. The writer indeed of many passages that have fallen from your pen could not long continue so. Let genius, true genius, conceal itself where it may, we may say of it, as the young man in Terence of his beautiful mistress, '*Diu latere non potest.*'

I am obliged to you for your kind offers of service, and will not say that I shall not be troublesome to you hereafter; but at present I have no need to be so. I have within these two days given the very last stroke of my pen to my long Translation, and what will be my next career I know not. At any rate we shall not, I hope, hereafter be known to each other as poets only, for your writings have made me ambitious of a nearer approach to you. Your door, however, will never be opened to me. My fate and fortune have combined with my natural disposition to draw a circle round me which I cannot pass; nor have I been more than thirteen miles from home these twenty years, and so far very seldom. But you are a younger man, and therefore may not be quite so immovable; in which case, should you choose at any time to move Westonward, you will always find me happy to receive you; and in the mean time I remain, with much respect,—Your most obedient servant, critic, and friend,

W. C.

P.S.—I wish to know what you mean to do with *Sir Thomas*.¹ For though I expressed doubts about

¹ *Sir Thomas More, a Tragedy*, by Hurdis.

his theatrical possibilities, I think him a very respectable person, and with some improvement well worthy of being introduced to the public.

TO JOSEPH HILL

March 10, 1791.

GIVE my affectionate remembrances to your sisters, and tell them I am impatient to entertain them with my old story new dressed.

I have two French prints hanging in my study, both on *Iliad* subjects; and I have an English one in the parlour, on a subject from the same poem. In one of the former, Agamemnon addresses Achilles exactly in the attitude of a dancing-master turning miss in a minuet: in the latter the figures are plain, and the attitudes plain also. This is, in some considerable measure I believe, the difference between my translation and Pope's; and will serve as an exemplification of what I am going to lay before you and the public.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH

The Lodge, March 12, 1791.

YOU are very kind, my dearest coz, to accede so readily to our purposed alterations. They are begun and it will not cost much time to finish them. The chamber allotted to your maiden will be a snug and commodious one enough, and as to the pantry there will be no need either to mount or descend to it, from which account of the matter you will conclude that it is on the ground. So in fact it is, but in a

nook so perfectly retired, that, well as I may be supposed acquainted with the house, I knew not that such a place existed. To give you an idea therefore of its situation would be difficult, perhaps impossible. Suffice it to say that it served our predecessors in the house in that very capacity, that it has exactly the aspect of the present pantry, consequently will be cool and airy, and that it adjoins the kitchen.

We were sure that Johnny's letter would give you pleasure, and therefore sent it. The little man has performed wonders—professors and doctors and whole colleges, you will see, have trooped to his whistle; and should Norfolk and Suffolk have been equally ready to follow him, our subscription list, already splendid, will be as numerous as it is respectable, and his success will remind me (it does indeed already) of Fielding's droll simile—

‘So a cock-sparrow in some farmer’s yard
Hops at the head of a huge flock of Turkeys.’

Thou mayst remember perhaps that long since (not less I suppose than a year and a half) I sent some ridiculous queries to the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, in hopes that either the answers to them, or some grave gentleman’s censure of them, would afford me an opportunity to kick up a controversy about them, for the amusement of myself and my friends at the Hall. Long time they remained unprinted, but at last they appeared and were answered not only in the *Magazine*, but soon after in several newspapers also; but nothing occurred that furnished me with the occasion of wrangling that I had sought. At length, however, in the last *Magazine*, a musty and insipid antiquarian has

thought proper to animadvert on the frivolous nature of my queries with an air of great gravity and self-importance. I have accordingly entered the lists; that is to say I have this very morning written and sent to the post a letter to Mr. Urban, complaining of the undue severity of old square toes' stricture, and proving him to be altogether as ignorant and a more frivolous writer than myself. Now, therefore, at last I hope that my end will be answered, and that there will be some sport between us. On my part at least nothing shall be wanting, for it will be delightful to me to plague him, and the occasion presents itself just at a time when I have leisure to improve it.

Surely we shall get Horace Walpole's name at last,¹ for I wrote myself to Johnson about it but a few days ago, and just before then thou told'st me that thou hadst done it.

I leave the ends of my paper by Mrs. U.'s desire for her use, and remain, my dearest coz, ever affectionately thine,

W.M. COWPER.

TO CLOTWORTHY ROWLEY

Weston Underwood, March 14, 1791.

MONDAY morning is a time that I now devote to my correspondence in particular, and therefore I devote the present morning to you. Monday is a *dies non Homericus*, a day on which, having despatched all the proof-sheets of the preceding week, and as yet received no others, I am free from all engagement to Homer.

I have sent my bookseller the names which you

¹ Walpole's letters of this period contain no reference to Cowper.

transmitted to me (for which I now thank you, with a lively sense of the kindness you have shown, and of the honour they will do me). I have sent them copied with the greatest care. There is no danger, I hope, that they will not be accurately printed, for I shall revise the proofs of the subscription list myself. I have also given him the minutest instructions, and the clearest possible, concerning the conveyance of the books to your country as soon as they shall be ready for exportation, copying them from your letter. Thus nothing has been or shall be wanting on my part to promote the proper management, and effect a decent conclusion of this business.

And now I will say, Oh my poor worried and tormented friend! why wast thou not, like me, a writer of verses, or almost any thing rather than a member of parliament? Had you been only a poor poet, the critics indeed might probably have given you some trouble; for that inconvenience no poet may hope to escape entirely, but the trouble that they can give, how trivial it is compared with that of a contested election! I heartily wish you well out of all this troublesome business, and hope that you will be able to tell me in your next that you are, and that all is settled to your mind.

I inquired of you in my last, if you knew aught, or had ever by accident heard of such a person as a Mr. Kellet of Cork, a banker. Application was made to him long since for a subscription to my Homer, and for his interest on that behalf, but he has returned no answer. He is a sort of relation of mine by marriage, having chosen his wife out of my own mother's family, and his silence on this occasion

makes me curious to know whether, as Homer says, he still opens his eyes on the bright lamp of day, or has already journeyed down into the house of Hades. If you can possibly, without giving yourself the least trouble,—for of that you have already as much as may content any reasonable man,—procure me any intelligence respecting this dumb body, you will oblige me by doing so.

My subscribers' names, all that had entered at that time, were published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and in the *Analytical Review* of last month. Should either of them fall in your way, you will see that I shall introduce you and your friends into no unworthy company; several splendid names have also been added since.—I am, my dear Rowley, most truly yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON

The Lodge, March 15, 1791.

MY DEAR MRS. FROG,—I send you my despatches by a messenger, who never was in town before, viz. by a pig. We hope, however, that by the help of a trusty guide he will arrive safe at the end of his journey.

I rejoice, though not in the cause of your return, the cold that you say has attended you in London, yet in the consequence of it, that it sends you down to us so soon. Soon I call it, because you return sooner than Mr. Frog, and sooner I suppose therefore than you intended. I shall know perhaps when we meet how much longer we must want your husband, and yet that may be a subject, one of the few

subjects, on which he is not yet himself perfectly enlightened. Give my love to him, and tell him that my charity for his religion will be all exhausted if it prove the occasion of keeping him in town all the summer. I have none even now for those who have thrown impediments in your way though of your own persuasion. The doctor dines with us to-day, and I shall endeavour to learn from him what can possibly be their motives, for they are far out of the reach of our most ingenious conjecture. I hope, however, that maugre all such opposition you will soon hold your lands on the same terms as others and as rich as Providence designed you should be.

If you have not seen my cousin of Norfolk Street very lately I shall now tell you a piece of news, for which if the thing pleases you as much as it has pleased me, you will thank me. The queries that I sent to Mr. Urban are at last censured, censured severely, and censured by the man of all the world whom I should have most wished to censure them, a grave, fusty, worm-eaten antiquarian. I have already sent up a reply in which I have given him a good dressing, and should it but make him as angry as I think it cannot fail to do, we shall have rare sport all the summer. I had actually given up all hope of such good fortune, and the arrival of it now at so late a day is therefore doubly agreeable.

Little Mr. Buchanan¹ will be of our party to-day, who at the last time he was here desired that when I wrote next I would make his particular compliments. Mrs. Unwin's accompany them, which is

¹ Curate of Weston Underwood.

all at present.—From your loving friend and neighbour,

W.M. COWPER.

I ought to have told you in my last that Tom has now found a shoemaker that fits him well, but I forgot it. He and Tit are in perfect health, and Tom talks of your coming home as well as he can, and with much pleasure.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

Weston, March 18, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I give you joy that you are about to receive some more of my elegant prose, and I feel myself in danger of attempting to make it even more elegant than usual, and thereby of spoiling it, under the influence of your commendations. But my old helter-skelter manner has already succeeded so well, that I will not, even for the sake of entitling myself to a still greater portion of your praise, abandon it.

I did not call in question Johnson's true spirit of poetry, because he was not qualified to relish blank verse (though, to tell you the truth, I think that but an ugly symptom); but if I did not express it, I meant, however, to infer it from the perverse judgment that he has formed of our poets in general; depreciating some of the best, and making honourable mention of others, in my opinion not undeservedly neglected. I will lay you sixpence that, had he lived in the days of Milton, and by any accident had met with his *Paradise Lost*, he would neither have directed the attention of others to it, nor have much admired it himself. Good

sense, in short, and strength of intellect, seem to me, rather than a fine taste, to have been distinguished characteristics. But should you still think otherwise, you have my free permission; for so long as you have yourself a taste for the beauties of Cowper, I care not a fig whether Johnson had a taste or not.

I wonder where you find all your quotations, pat as they are to the present condition of France. Do you make them yourself, or do you actually find them? I am apt to suspect sometimes, that you impose them only on a poor man who has but twenty books¹ in the world, and two of them are your brother Chester's. They are however much to the purpose, be the author of them who he may.

I was very sorry to learn lately that my friend at Chicheley has been some time indisposed, either with gout or rheumatism (for it seems to be uncertain which), and attended by Dr. Kerr. I am at

¹ See my *Life of William Cowper*, p. 526. Subsequently this number, by gifts from friends, was increased to 177. The original catalogue taken by William Barker, the bookseller, and Miss Perowne, is preserved in the Cowper Museum at Olney.

The twenty books were probably :—

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. His father's Family Bible. | 8. Pearsall's <i>Meditations</i> . |
| 2. 'A little Horace of mine.' | 9. Milton. |
| 3. Ainsworth's <i>Latin and English Dictionary</i> . | 10. Villoison's <i>Iliad</i> . (See 4 Oct. 1789.) |
| 4. Beattie's Poems. | 11. Twining's <i>Aristotle</i> . (See 30 April 1789.) |
| 5. Burns's Poems. | 12. Clarke's <i>Commentary on Homer</i> . (See March 1788.) |
| 6. Psalms and Hymns (Martin Madan's collection). | 13. <i>Travels of Solander</i> . (See 5 July 1788). |
| 7. Vincent Bourne's Latin Poems. | |

The remaining seven were perhaps Thomson's *Seasons*, one of John Newton's books, Hervey's *Meditations*, a Greek New Testament, a book on Gardening, a volume of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and Bishop Newton on the Prophecies.

a loss to conceive how so temperate a man should acquire the gout, and am resolved therefore to conclude that it must be the rheumatism, which, bad as it is, is in my judgment the best of the two; and will afford me besides some opportunity to sympathise with him, for I am not perfectly exempt from it myself. Distant as you are in situation, you are yet perhaps nearer to him in point of intelligence than I; and if you can send me any particular news of him, pray do it in your next.

I love and thank you for your benediction. If God forgive me my sins, surely I shall love Him much, for I have much to be forgiven. But the quantum need not discourage me, since there is One whose atonement can suffice for all.

*Toῦ δὲ καθ' αἷμα ῥέεν, καὶ σοὶ καὶ ἐμοὶ, καὶ ἀδελφοῖς
Ἡμετέροις αὐτοῦ σωζομένοις θανάτῳ.*

Accept our joint remembrances, and believe me affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON

Weston, March 19, 1791.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,—You ask if it may not be improper to solicit Lady Hesketh's subscription to the poems of the Norwich maiden? To which I reply, it will be by no means improper. On the contrary, I am persuaded that she will give her name with a very good will, for she is much an admirer of poesy that is worthy to be admired, and such I think, judging by the specimen, the poesy of this maiden, Elizabeth Bentley of Norwich, is likely to prove.

Not that I am myself inclined to expect in general great matters, in the poetical way, from persons whose ill fortune it has been to want the common advantages of education; neither do I account it in general a kindness to such, to encourage them in the indulgence of a propensity more likely to do them harm in the end, than to advance their interest. Many such phenomena have arisen within my remembrance, at which all the world has wondered for a season, and has then forgot them.

The fact is, that though strong natural genius is always accompanied with strong natural tendency to its object, yet it often happens that the tendency is found where the genius is wanting. In the present instance, however (the poems of a certain Mrs. Leapor¹ excepted, who published some forty years ago), I discern, I think, more marks of a true poetical talent than I remember to have observed in the verses of any other, male or female, so disadvantageously circumstanced. I wish her therefore good speed, and subscribe to her with all my heart.

You will rejoice when I tell you that I have some hopes, after all, of a harvest from Oxford also; Mr. Throckmorton has written to a person of considerable influence there, which he has desired him to exert in my favour; and *his* request, I should imagine, will hardly prove a vain one.
Adieu!

W. C

¹ Mary Leapor (1722-1746). Author of a number of poems and a play *The Unhappy Father*, all published after her death.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Weston, March 24, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—You apologise for your silence in a manner which affords me so much pleasure, that I cannot but be satisfied. Let business be the cause, and I am contented. This is a cause to which I would even be accessory myself, and would increase yours by any means, except by a lawsuit of my own, at the expense of all your opportunities of writing oftener than thrice in a twelvemonth.

I am glad that the prosecution of which you have had the conduct, troublesome as it must have been, has not been unsuccessful, and admire much that in the heart of a man who chose to subsist by plunder, that noble flame, the love of his country, should burn so bright, that he is offended at being sent abroad, after meriting to die at home. You must have been very merciful to him, or I see not how he could have escaped it.

Your application to Dr. Dunbar reminds me of two lines to be found somewhere in Dr. Young:—

‘And now a poet’s gratitude you see,
Grant him two favours, and he’ll ask for three.’

In this particular, therefore, I perceive that a poet, and a poet’s friend, bear a striking resemblance to each other. The Doctor will bless himself that the number of Scotch universities is not larger, assured that if they equalled those in England, in number of colleges, you would give him no rest till he had engaged them all. It is true, as Lady

Hesketh told you, that I shall not fear in the matter of subscription a comparison even with Pope himself; considering (I mean) that we live in days of terrible taxation, and when verse, not being a necessary of life, is accounted dear, be it what it may, even at the lowest price. I am no very good arithmetician, yet I calculated the other day in my morning walk, that my two volumes, at the price of three guineas, will cost the purchaser less than the seventh part of a farthing per line. Yet there are lines among them that have cost me the labour of hours, and none that have not cost me some labour.

W. C.

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON

25 March, 1791.

MY DEAR MRS. FROG,—I have waited to the present hour that I might be able to ascertain what measure of strength and spirits I should be able to bring with me, if I should dine with you to-day and find myself a []¹ miserable, fit only to go to sleep, for which reason, if you please, I will postpone it till I can be more agreeable.

The cause of all this is a disturbance that occurred last night or rather this morning. A party of drunkards returning to Olney thro' Weston, I know not whence, at three o'clock amused themselves with thundering at our door. I had just then awaked, and concluding that our own house or yours was in flames, was immediately seized with a fever, which has quite exhausted me. The fever is gone, but not

¹ Word omitted in the copy. The original of this letter is apparently lost.

the effects of it, which will make it better for me to dine with you to-morrow.—Adieu, yours ever,

Friday, one o'clock.

Wm. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH

Friday night, March 25, 1791.

MY DEAREST Coz,—Johnson writes me word that he has repeatedly called on Horace Walpole, and has never found him at home. He has also written to him, and received no answer. I charge thee therefore on thy allegiance, that thou move not a finger more in this business. My back is up, and I cannot bear the thought of wooing him any further, nor would do it, though he were as *pig* a gentleman (look you!) as Lucifer himself. I have Welsh blood in me, if the pedigree of the Donnes say true, and every drop of it says, ‘Let him alone! ’

I should have dined at the Hall to-day, having engaged myself to do so; but an untoward occurrence, that happened last night, or rather this morning, prevented me. It was a thundering rap at the door, just after the clock struck three. First, I thought the house was on fire. Then I thought the Hall was on fire. Then I thought it was a housebreaker’s trick. Then I thought it was an express. In any case I thought that if it should be repeated, it would awaken and terrify Mrs. Unwin, and kill her with spasms. The consequence of all these thoughts was the worst nervous fever I ever had in my life, although it was the shortest. The rap was given but once, though a multifarious one. Had I heard a second,

I should have risen myself at all adventures. It was the only minute since you went, in which I have been glad that you were not here. Soon after I came down, I learned that a drunken party had passed through the village at that time, and they were no doubt the authors of this witty, but troublesome invention.

Our thanks are due to you for the book you sent us. Mrs. Unwin has read to me several parts of it, which I have much admired. The observations are shrewd and pointed; and there is much wit in the similes and illustrations. Yet a remark struck me, which I could not help making *vivâ voce* on the occasion. If the book has any real value, and does in truth deserve the notice taken of it by those to whom it is addressed, its claim is founded neither on the expression, nor on the style, nor on the wit of it, but altogether on the truth that it contains. Now the same truths are delivered, to my knowledge, perpetually from the pulpit by ministers whom the admirers of this writer would disdain to hear. Yet the truth is not the less important for not being accompanied and recommended by brilliant thoughts and expressions; neither is God, from whom comes all truth, any more a respecter of wit than He is of persons. It will appear soon whether they applaud the book for the sake of its unanswerable arguments, or only tolerate the argument for the sake of the splendid manner in which it is enforced. I wish as heartily that it may do them good, as if I were myself the author of it. But alas! my wishes and hopes are much at variance. It will be the talk of the day, as another publication of

the same kind has been; and then the noise of Vanity Fair will drown the voice of the preacher.

I am glad to learn that the Chancellor does not forget me, though more for his sake than my own: for I see not how he can ever serve a man like me.—Adieu, my dearest coz.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

March 29, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—It affords me sincere pleasure that you enjoy serenity of mind after your great loss. It is well in all circumstances, even in the most afflictive, with those who have God for their comforter. You do me justice in giving entire credit to my expressions of friendship for you. No day passes in which I do not look back to the days that are fled; and consequently, none in which I do not feel myself affectionately reminded of you, and of her whom you have lost for a season. I cannot even see Olney spire from any of the fields in the neighbourhood, much less can I enter the town, and still less the vicarage, without experiencing the force of those mementos, and recollecting a multitude of passages, to which you and yours were parties.

The past would appear a dream, were the remembrance of it less affecting. It was in the most important respects so unlike my present moment, that I am sometimes almost tempted to suppose it a dream. But the difference between dreams and realities long since elapsed seems to consist chiefly in this,—that a dream, however painful or pleasant at the time, and perhaps for a few ensuing hours,

passes like an arrow through the air, leaving no trace of its flight behind it; but our actual experiences make a lasting impression. We review those which interested us much, when they occurred, with hardly less interest than in the first instance; and whether few years or many have intervened, our sensibility makes them still present; such a mere nullity is time, to a creature to whom God gives a feeling heart and the faculty of recollection.

That you have not the first sight, and sometimes, perhaps, have a late one, of what I write, is owing merely to your distant situation. Some things I have written not worth your perusal; and a few, a very few, of such length, that, engaged as I have been to Homer, it has not been possible that I should find opportunity to transcribe them. At the same time, Mrs. Unwin's constant pain in her side has almost forbidden her the use of the pen. She cannot use it long without increasing that pain; for which reason I am more unwilling than herself that she should ever meddle with it. But, whether what I write be a trifle, or whether it be serious, you would certainly, were you present, see them all. Others get a sight of them, by being so, who would never otherwise see them; and I should hardly withhold them from you, whose claim upon me is of so much older a date than theirs. It is not, indeed, with readiness and good-will that I give them to any body; for, if I live, I shall probably print them; and my friends, who are previously well acquainted with them, will have less reason to value the book in which they shall appear. A trifle can have nothing to recommend it but its novelty. I have spoken of giving copies; but, in fact, I have given

none. They who have them made them; for, till my whole work shall have fairly passed the press, it will not leave me a moment more than is necessarily due to my correspondents. Their number has of late increased upon me, by the addition of many of my maternal relations, who, having found me out about a year since, have behaved to me in the most affectionate manner, and have been singularly serviceable to me in the article of my subscription. Several of them are coming from Norfolk to visit me in the course of the summer.

I enclose a copy of my last mortuary verses. The clerk, for whom they were written, is since dead; and whether his successor, the late sexton, will choose to be his own dirge-maker, or will employ me, is a piece of important news which has not yet reached me.

Our best remembrances attend yourself and Miss Catlett, and we rejoice in the kind Providence that has given you, in her, so amiable and comfortable a companion.—Adieu, my dear friend, I am sincerely yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON

April 1, 1791.

MY DEAR MRS. FROG,—A word or two before breakfast; which is all that I should have time to send you.—You have not, I hope, forgot to tell Mr. Frog, how much I am obliged to him for his kind though unsuccessful attempt in my favour at Oxford. It seems not a little extraordinary, that persons so nobly patronised themselves on the score of literature, should resolve to give no encourage-

ment to it in return. Should I find a fair opportunity to thank them hereafter, I will not neglect it.

Could Homer come himself, distress'd and poor,
And tune his harp at Rhedycina's door,
The rich old vixen would exclaim (I fear),
' Begone ! no trumper gets a farthing here.'

I have read your husband's pamphlet through and through. You may think perhaps, and so may he, that a question so remote from all concern of mine could not interest me ; but if you think so, you are both mistaken. He can write nothing that will not interest me ; in the first place, for the writer's sake ; and in the next place, because he writes better and reasons better than any body,—with more candour, and with more sufficiency, and consequently with more satisfaction to all his readers, save only his opponents. They, I think, by this time wish that they had let him alone.

Tom is delighted past measure with his wooden nag, and gallops at a rate that would kill any horse that had a life to lose.

Mrs. Nunerly bids me tell you that both he and his sister have got rid of their colds, and are in perfect health. He has travelled so much in his nursery that I have not had the good fortune to meet him since you went, but I sent Samuel yesterday in the evening to inquire after him, who found him riding and as happy as even you could wish him.

Miss Bab¹ Chester came here yesterday on her pony to introduce to me Lord Bagot's eldest son, accompanied by his tutor. I liked them both. The young man has a handsome countenance, sensible

¹ Barbara.

and expressive, and his tutor, whose name, if I remember it, was Hurlock, seems gentle and amiable, and well qualified for his office. It happened that I was not in one of my shy moods, so we were all chatty and agreeable. We have met with some rubs of late in the affair of by-post, and I began to fear that I should have occasion to give Mr. Frog some trouble about it, lest that convenience should be lost to us. All the danger that seemed to threaten us was occasioned by the post-mistress at Olney, but at present we go on in our old train.— With our joint best compts. to you both, I remain, my dear Mrs. F., sincerely yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO JOHN JOHNSON

Weston, April 6, 1791.

MY DEAR JOHNNY,—A thousand thanks for your splendid assemblage of Cambridge luminaries! If you are not contented with your collection, it can only be because you are unreasonable; for I, who may be supposed more covetous on this occasion than any body, am highly satisfied, and even delighted with it. If indeed you should find it practicable to add still to the number, I have not the least objection. But this charge I give you,

"Αλλο δὲ τοι ἔρεω, σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῆσι,

stay not an hour beyond the time you have mentioned, even though you should be able to add a thousand names by so doing! For I cannot afford to purchase them at that cost. I long to see you, and so do we both, and will not suffer you to post-

pone your visit for any such consideration. No, my dear boy ! in the affair of subscriptions we are already illustrious enough ; shall be so at least, when you shall have enlisted a college or two more, which perhaps you may be able to do in the course of the ensuing week. I feel myself much obliged to your university, and much disposed to admire the liberality of spirit they have shown on this occasion. Certainly I had not deserved much favour of their hands, all things considered. But the cause of literature seems to have some weight with them, and to have superseded the resentment they might be supposed to entertain on the score of certain censures that you wot of. It is not so at Oxford.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

The Lodge, Thursday Evening, April 7, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Admit a client by whom you will get nothing but trouble. It is the lot of all you Londoners who have friends in the country, and was once my own. I have two wants, and only you can supply them.

In the first place I want shoes; which indeed I told you when I had last the pleasure to see you here, and you noted it in your tables. Be so kind as to order your artist in the leather way to make me three pair of the common sort, and two pair of walking shoes, substantially put together, and that may serve me two years, for so long I used those which I have lately discarded. He must allow himself no delay, but must work double tides, lest I go barefoot or be obliged to have recourse to the

farrier, a more eligible assistant in such a case than any of the cobblers hereabout.

Secondly, I want cheese—a Cheshire cheese—a large one. Mrs. Unwin says of about sixty or seventy lb. weight. The last you procured for us was excellent and did great honour both to the taster and the county that produced it. At present we have not above two ounces of it left, which I mention that you may judge of the greatness of the emergency and how much need there is of expedition in this case also. Lady Hesketh has given bond to pay for it, and I will take care that in my next letter she shall hear of it with both ears.

I hope Mr. Frogat continues true to you. Of this I am sure, that you will not lose *him* as I lost a legion of attorneys myself, by never doing the business they brought me.

My cousin, Johnson, has done great things for me at Cambridge. He is such another friend as you, active and warm in my interest to a degree that suits me exactly; me, who never could do myself any good, and had therefore always great need of such as would do it for me. I expect him here morrow s'ennight.

My printer wants no good quality save that of expedition. I scold him, but he will not budge. Should you happen to go near Johnson's home you will oblige me by giving him a gentle hint. Only ask him when he thinks the town will adjourn to the country, and when we are likely to publish; for I get but five sheets a week, and we are now only in the eleventh *Odyssey*.

With our joint best compts. to yourself and Mrs. Rose,—I remain sincerely yours, W.M. COWPER.

I sent your books according to notice, and hope they arrived safe.

TO JOSEPH HILL

April 27, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—You heap kindness on kindness, and all on the head of a pauper, who will never be able to make you any other return than the lean one of acknowledgments. I shall be glad to keep the nest-egg, if it can be kept, but I apprehend rather that the approaching summer will go near to addle it. I will not, however, make free with that precious deposit unless constrained to it by necessity; a supply perhaps may in the meantime arise from some other quarter, and it is even possible that Homer himself may yield it, for the negotiation about price can hardly be a long one. You may depend on my doing nothing without first consulting Rose.¹ Apprised as I am of my own insufficiency in the art of bargain-making, I am myself the last man in the world in whom I would place confidence on such an occasion. This, you will acknowledge, implies some prudence and even some discernment. As to Johnson, I am still inclined to think well of him, I mean as to the liberality of his character. He certainly dealt handsomely with me in undertaking to print my *Task* at his own risk before he had seen a line of it. Then again, he has a good report from all who know him; and thirdly and lastly he gave a handsome price, viz. £800, to Dr. Darwin for his *Loves of the Plants*.² All these

¹ Probably referring to the copyright of the poems.

² Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802). His *Loves of the Plants*, which appeared in 1789, was reviewed by Cowper in the *Analytical Review*.

things put together make me hope well of him. A short time, however, will ascertain the question clearly.

With my best respects to Mrs. Hill,—I am, most sincerely yours,

Wm. COWPER.

From the top of this letter was cut off a receipt for £40.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

April 29, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I forgot if I told you that Mr. Throckmorton had applied through the medium of — to the University of Oxford.¹ He did so, but without success. Their answer was, ‘that they subscribe to nothing.’

Pope's subscriptions did not amount, I think, to six hundred; and mine will not fall very short of five. Noble doings, at a time of day when Homer has no news to tell us; and when, all other comforts of life having risen in price, poetry has of course fallen. I call it a ‘comfort of life’; it is so to others, but to myself it is become even a necessary.

These holiday times are very unfavourable to the printer's progress. He and all his demons are making themselves merry and me sad, for I mourn at every hinderance.

I lately received from Johnson an offer to purchase the copy, and graciously consented to sell it to him.

W. C.

¹ See Letter of 19th March 1791.

TO MRS. BALLS

Weston, April 30, 1791.

MY DEAR COUSIN,—I admit all your excuses; and as to my pardons, I will keep them for those who need them more. I am not very apt to be angry with my friends, and had no doubt that when your letter should arrive, it would give sufficient reasons for its long delay. Yet I say too much, when I say that I admit them all; for as to the stupidity that you plead, that is by no means admissible. How can you possibly be stupid so many months together, without losing your wits entirely? And that you were in full possession of them when you wrote your last, your letter itself evinces sufficiently. That apology therefore must be excepted, and the rest are sufficient, without it.

I look forward to the beginning of June with great pleasure, as to a time that will restore to me a near relation, with whom I have been merry in the days of my youth, and with whom I shall hope to be cheerful yet again; a relation, too, who will be the more welcome, because till lately I had no hope that I should see her more. I have great pleasure also in expecting your niece,¹ of whom I conjecture everything that is amiable and pleasant both in temper and in manners; and thus I think of her, not only because she is of a family, every individual of which I have found such, but because she is Johnny's sister; and he cannot be so nearly related to anything that is not perfectly agreeable. By the way, lest I should forget it, I will mention it

¹ Catherine Johnson, sister of John Johnson.

now. He wishes you by all means to do as you propose, to come together from Swaffham hither, not only because it will save you so much unnecessary travelling (though that consideration weighs with him as it ought), but also because his sister will in that case have time to rest and refresh herself with you before she proceeds to Cambridge. Whether he means to write to her on this subject or not is more than I can tell you at present, for he is at this moment in bed and asleep, but I have no doubt that he will, because you desire it. I have been myself the subject of all his letters lately ; for me he has toiled day and night ; and since he began to collect subscriptions to my Homer, seemed to exist for no other purpose. Neither have his labours been in vain ; for of all my friends and assistants in this cause, he has been the most successful.

I would with all my heart, and I wish it on all accounts, that Mrs. Susan Bodham enjoyed better health, for I foresee that, as her infirmities deprived me of the sight of my Rose last summer, so they will again in this that is coming. You will think my reason a selfish one, but are we not all selfish in such cases ?

Mrs. Unwin bids me present her love to you, and entreat you to fix no time for your return into Norfolk. You have neither of you a family to call you back, for which reason there can be no need of it. Give my best love to Catherine ; and believe me, my dear coz, most afft. yours,

Wm. COWPER.

P.S.—Your nephew is now breakfasting at my elbow, and bids me assure you that he will write this

very day to his sister. God give you a good journey to Cambridge, and thence to Weston. Amen!

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

Weston, May 2, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Monday being a day in which Homer has now no demands upon me, I shall give part of the present Monday to you. But it this moment occurs to me, that the proposition with which I begin will be obscure to you, unless followed by an explanation. You are to understand therefore, that Monday being no post-day, I have consequently no proof-sheets to correct, the correction of which is nearly all that I have to do with Homer at present; I say nearly all, because I am likewise occasionally employed in reading over the whole of what is already printed, that I may make a table of errata to each of the poems. How much is already printed, say you?—I answer—the whole *Iliad*, and almost seventeen books of the *Odyssey*.

About a fortnight since, perhaps three weeks,¹ I had a visit from your nephew, Mr. Bagot, and his tutor, Mr. Hurlock, who came hither under conduct of your niece, Miss Barbara. So were the friends of Ulysses conducted to the palace of Antiphates, the Læstrygonian, by that monarch's daughter. But mine is no palace, neither am I a giant, neither did I devour any one of the party;—on the contrary, I gave them chocolate, and permitted them to depart in peace. I was much pleased both with the young

¹ See letter of April 1, 1791.

man and his tutor. In the countenance of the former I saw much Bagotism, and not less in his manners. I will leave you to guess what I mean by that expression. Physiognomy is a study of which I have almost as high an opinion as Lavater himself, the professor of it, and for this good reason, because it never yet deceived me. But perhaps I shall speak more truly if I say that I am somewhat of an adept in the art, although I have *never studied* it; for whether I will or not, I judge of every human creature by the countenance, and as I say, have never yet seen reason to repent of my judgment. Sometimes I feel myself powerfully attracted, as I was by your nephew, and sometimes with equal vehemence repulsed, which attraction and repulsion have always been justified in the sequel.

I have lately read, and with more attention than I ever gave to them before, Milton's Latin poems. But these I must make the subject of some future letter, in which it will be ten to one that your friend Samuel Johnson gets another slap or two at the hands of your humble servant. Pray read them yourself, and with as much attention as I did; then read the Doctor's remarks if you have them, and then tell me what you think of both. It will be pretty sport for you on such a day as this, which is the fourth that we have had of almost incessant rain. The weather, and a cold—the effect of it, have confined me ever since last Thursday. Mrs. Unwin however is well, and joins me in every good wish to yourself and family.—I am, my good friend, most truly yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN BUCHANAN¹*Weston, May 11, 1791.*

MY DEAR SIR,—You have sent me a beautiful poem,² wanting nothing but metre. I would to Heaven that you would give it that requisite yourself; for he who could make the sketch, cannot but be well qualified to finish. But if you will not, I will; provided always nevertheless, that God gives me ability, for it will require no common share to do justice to your conceptions.—I am much yours,

W. C.

Your little messenger vanished before I could catch him.

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON

The Lodge, May 17, 1791.

MY DEAR MRS. FROG,—Though you were a whole letter in my debt I yet had it in contemplation to write to you, and should certainly have done so had any thing occurred worthy of communication. But the affairs in our village have proceeded in one even tenor ever since your last departure, undisturbed by the least interruption (except a night or two since another drunken party passed through it, breaking windows as they went, but not ours). The doctor has met with another lion. Mrs. Unwin and I, entering Hill Field on our return from Olney, saw him near the middle of

¹ He lived at what is now the Cowper's Oak Inn, a few doors from Cowper. ² *The Four Ages.* See letter of June 23, 1791.

the field and advancing with such heroic strides as he usually makes, towards us. But suddenly a terrible sound was heard from the bottom of Hoebrook. The Doctor stopped. In a short time the sound was repeated. The Doctor turned short about and stood with his back towards us. A third time the sound ascended the Hill, and the Doctor, no longer able to stand his ground, set off at his quickest pace, and was safe in the house before we could reach it. Presently a horse passed us led by a groom, dressed in body-cloths. I should have answered your letter by the post immediately ensuing the receipt of it, had I not waited for the return of Mr. Palmer¹ from London, who promised me that he would make inquiry at the post-office concerning the probable effect of our complaint lodged there. I saw him last night and found that he had so done, and the result of his inquiry is that the affair is in the best train possible, that the secretaries are entirely disposed to do justice, and that the present occupant at Olney will shortly be suspended. There is accordingly no need that Mr. Frog should trouble himself with any application to Lord Chesterfield on the occasion. Could I spare you without missing you so much as I do, I should be glad you now and then make a trip to London, were it only that you may fight the battles of truth and reason, and correct the erring judgments of the metropolitans. What a barbarian Lady! Her reply to you reminded of those lines in Paradise Lost—

‘So spake the Fiend, and with necessity,
The tyrant’s plea, excus’d his devilish deed.’

¹ Draper of Olney.

My bird is washing himself and spurtles my paper, so adieu, my dear Mrs. Frog, and believe me, with my love to you and yours,—Your affectionate
W.M. COWPER.

I grieve that your brother is indisposed. Remember me kindly to him. All will be well, I hope, both with him and with me, in less than a century. Mrs. Unwin sends her compts.

TO CATHERINE JOHNSON¹

May 17, 1791.

MY DEAR COUSIN,—That you may know somewhat of me, at least before you come, I send you my handwriting, just to tell you that Mrs. Unwin and I expect you here with a pleasure which no pleasure can exceed, except what we shall feel on your actual arrival. I learn from your brother that you are in a degree beyond himself apprehensive of strangers, but be not afraid of us, my sweet Catherine, before you come, for we will venture to assure you that you shall have no reason to be so afterward.—With Mrs. Unwin's best love, I am, very affectionately yours,
W.M. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH

The Lodge, May 18, 1791.

MY DEAREST COZ,—Has another of thy letters fallen short of its destination; or wherefore is it, that thou writest not? One letter in five weeks is a poor allowance for your friends at Weston. One

¹ A sister of 'Johnny of Norfolk.' She married her cousin, Charles Hewitt, and died in 1820.

that I received two or three days since from Mrs. Frog has not at all enlightened me on this head. But I wander in a wilderness of vain conjecture.

Mr. Bean, who went to town on Monday, purposes to pay his respect to thee, and to introduce to thee, not me, but my likeness, and if I do not flatter myself, a good one. Perhaps it is a little too young, but not younger than I was once, therefore do not object to it on that account.

I have had a letter lately from New York, from a Dr. Cogswell¹ of that place, to thank me for my fine verses, and to tell me, which pleased me particularly, that after having read *The Task*, my first volume fell into his hands, which he read also, and was equally pleased with. This is the only instance I can recollect of a reader who has done justice to my first effusions: for I am sure, that in point of expression they do not fall a jot below my second, and that in point of subject they are for the most part superior. But enough, and too much of this. *The Task*, he tells me, has been reprinted in that city.

Adieu! my dearest coz.

We have blooming scenes under wintry skies,
and with icy blasts to fan them.—Ever thine,

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON

Weston, May 23, 1791.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,—Did I not know that you are never more in your element, than when you are

¹ See letter of 15 June 1791.

exerting yourself in my cause, I should congratulate you on the hope there seems to be that your labour will soon have an end.

You will wonder perhaps, my Johnny, that Mrs. Unwin, by my desire, enjoined you to secrecy concerning the translation of the *Frogs and Mice*. Wonderful it may well seem to you that I should wish to hide for a short time from a few, what I am just going to publish to all. But I had more reasons than one for this mysterious management; that is to say, I had two. In the first place, I wished to surprise my readers agreeably; and secondly, I wished to allow none of my friends an opportunity to object to the measure, who might think it perhaps a measure more bountiful than prudent. But I have had my sufficient reward, though not a pecuniary one. It is a poem of much humour, and accordingly I found the translation of it very amusing. It struck me too, that I must either make it a part of the present publication, or never publish it at all; it would have been so terribly out of its place in any other volume.

I long for the time that shall bring you once more to Weston, and all your *et ceteras* with you. O! what a month of May has this been! Let never poet, English poet at least, give himself to the praises of May again.

W. C.

TO MRS. KING

Weston Underwood, May 26, 1791.

MY DEAR MADAM,—It is high time that I should write, be it only to convince you that my regard for you will prompt me to it, even though I have

not the pleasure of hearing from you. To say truth, we have both been very anxious about you, verily believing that nothing less than severe indisposition would have kept you so long silent. If this be the case, I beg that you will not think of returning me an answer, for though it would give us the greatest pleasure to hear from you, we should be sincerely sorry to purchase that pleasure at your expense, and can only wish for a line on condition that you are able to write one without increasing the pain with which I suppose you afflicted.

With these apprehensions about you, I should certainly have made this inquiry much sooner, would my daily attentions to what is going forward in the press have permitted. This engagement has now been almost of a year's standing, and I am not even now released from it; but I rejoice to be able to say that my release is at hand, for the last line of the *Odyssey* will be printed this day. There remain the preface, the list of subscribers, and two or three odd matters beside, and then I shall be once more at liberty.

You have not, I think, forgotten, my dear Madam, that you and Mr. King gave us a hope of seeing you this summer at Weston. In a fortnight we expect some relations of mine from Norfolk; what stay they will make with us, is to us unknown at present, but I shall send you the earliest notice of their departure, in the hope that you will supply their place as soon as possible. Years are waning apace, and if we mean to cultivate and improve the intercourse we have begun, there is no time to be lost. Let us not have it to say, when we meet in another world, that we

might, if we would, have known each other better in this.

It is so long since I wrote my last letter to you, that I cannot at all recollect the date of it; but I seem to remember telling you in it, that I had narrowly escaped the greatest of all my terrors, a nervous fever. To say that I escaped it is indeed saying too much, for I question if I am at any time entirely free from it; but I thank God that I escaped the degree of it, with which, in January, I seemed to be threatened. At present I am in pretty good health, yet not quite so well, I think, as in former years at this season. Mrs. Unwin, I believe, is about as well as when she had the pleasure to see you at Weston.

Thus, my dear Madam, I have said all that appears to me worth saying at present. I have told you how we fare ourselves, and that we are anxious to know how it fares with you. I will add nothing but Mrs. Unwin's best compliments, together with my own, to both our friends at Pertenhall, and I am, dear Madam, affectionately yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH

The Lodge, May 27, 1791.

MY DEAREST COZ,—I, who am neither dead, nor sick, nor idle, should have no excuse, were I as tardy in answering, as you in writing. I live indeed where leisure abounds; and you where leisure is not: a difference that accounts sufficiently both for your silence and my loquacity.

When you told Mrs. ——,¹ that my Homer would come forth in May, you told her what you believed, and therefore no falsehood. But you told her at the same time what will not happen, and therefore not a truth. There is a medium between truth and falsehood; and (I believe) the word mistake expresses it exactly. I will therefore say that you were mistaken. If instead of May you had mentioned June, I flatter myself that you would have hit the mark. For in June there is every probability that we shall publish. You will say, ‘Hang the printer!—for it is his fault.’ But stay, my dear, hang him not just now! For to execute him, and find another, will cost us time, and so much too that I question if, in that case, we should publish sooner than in August. To say truth, I am not perfectly sure that there will be any necessity to hang him at all; though that is a matter which I desire to leave entirely at your discretion, alleging only in the mean time, that the man does not appear to me during the last half-year to have been at all in fault. His remittance of sheets in all that time has been punctual, save and except while the Easter holidays lasted, when (I suppose) he found it impossible to keep his devils to their business. I shall however receive the last sheet of the *Odyssey* to-morrow, and have already sent up the preface, together with all the needful. You see therefore that the publication of this famous work cannot be delayed much longer.

As for politics, I reck not, having no room in my head for anything but the Slave Bill. That is lost; and all the rest is a trifle. I have not seen

¹ Probably Montagu.

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Paine's¹ book, but refused to see it when it was offered to me. No man shall convince me that I am improperly governed, while I feel the contrary.—
Adieu!

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON

Weston, June 1, 1791.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,—Now you may rest—now I can give you joy of the period, of which I gave you hope in my last; the period of all your labours in my service. But this I can foretell you also, that if you persevere in serving your friends at this rate, your life is likely to be a life of labour:—Yet persevere! your rest will be the sweeter hereafter! In the mean time I wish you, if at any time you should find occasion for him, just such a friend as you have proved to me!

W. C.

TO THE REV. JAMES HURDIS

Weston, June 13, 1791.

MY DEAR SIR,—I ought to have thanked you for your agreeable and entertaining letter much sooner, but I have many correspondents, who will not be said nay; and have been obliged of late to give my last attentions to Homer. The very last indeed; for yesterday I despatched to town, after revising them carefully, the proof sheets of subscribers' names, among which I took special notice of yours, and am much obliged to you for it. We have contrived, or rather my bookseller and printer have contrived (for they have never waited a moment

¹ Thomas Paine (1737-1809). His *Rights of Man* appeared in 1791-2.

for me), to publish as critically at the wrong time, as if my whole interest and success had depended upon it. March, April, and May, said Johnson to me in a letter that I received from him in February, are the best months for publication. *Therefore* now it is determined that Homer shall come out on the 1st of July, that is to say, exactly at the moment when, except a few lawyers, not a creature will be left in town who will ever care one farthing about him. To which of these two friends of mine I am indebted for this management, I know not. It does not please; but I would be a philosopher as well as a poet, and therefore make no complaint, or grumble at all about it. You, I presume, have had dealings with them both;—how did they manage for you? And if as they have for me, how did you behave under it? Some who love me complain that I am too passive; and I should be glad of an opportunity to justify myself by your example. The fact is, should I thunder ever so loud no efforts of that sort will avail me now; therefore, like a good economist of my bolts, I choose to reserve them for more profitable occasions.

I am glad to find that your amusements have been so similar to mine; for in this instance too I seemed to have need of somebody to keep me in countenance, especially in my attention and attachment to animals. All the notice that we lords of the creation vouchsafe to bestow on the creatures, is generally to abuse them; it is well therefore that here and there a man should be found a little womanish, or perhaps a little childish in this matter, who will make some amends, by kiss-

ing, and coaxing, and laying them in one's bosom. You remember the little ewe lamb, mentioned by the prophet Nathan; the prophet perhaps invented the tale for the sake of its application to David's conscience; but it is more probable that God inspired him with it for that purpose. If he did, it amounts to a proof that He does not overlook, but on the contrary much notices such little partialities and kindness to his *dumb* creatures, as we, because we articulate, are pleased to call them.

Your sisters are fitter to judge than I, whether assembly rooms are the places of all others, in which the ladies may be studied to most advantage. I am an old fellow, but I had once my dancing days, as you have now; yet I could never find that I had learned half so much of a woman's real character by dancing with her, as by conversing with her at home, where I could observe her behaviour at the table, at the fireside, and in all the trying circumstances of domestic life. We are all good when we are pleased; but she is the good woman, who wants not a fiddle to sweeten her. If I am wrong, the young ladies will set me right; in the mean time I will not tease you with graver arguments on the subject, especially as I have a hope that years, and the study of the Scripture, and His Spirit, whose word it is, will in due time bring you to my way of thinking. I am not one of those sages, who require that young men should be as old as themselves before they have had time to be so.—With my love to your fair sisters, I remain, Dear Sir, most truly yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

The Lodge, June 15, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND, — If it will afford you any comfort that you have a share in my affections, of that comfort you may avail yourself at all times. You have acquired it by means which, unless I should become worthless myself, to an uncommon degree, will always secure you from the loss of it. You are learning what all learn, though few at so early an age, that man is an ungrateful animal ; and that benefits too often, instead of securing a due return, operate rather as provocations to ill-treatment. This I take to be the *summum malum* of the human heart. Towards God we are all guilty of it more or less ; but between man and man, we may thank God for it, there are some exceptions. He leaves this peccant principle to operate in some degree against Himself in all, for our humiliation I suppose ; and because the pernicious effects of it in reality cannot injure Him, He cannot suffer by them ; but He knows that unless He should restrain its influence on the dealings of mankind with each other, the bonds of society would be dissolved, and all charitable intercourse at an end amongst us. It was said of Archbishop Cranmer, ‘ Do him an ill turn, and you make him your *friend* for ever ’ ; of others it may be said, ‘ Do them a good one, and they will be for ever your *enemies*. ’ It is the grace of God only that makes the difference.

The absence of Homer (for we have now shaken hands and parted) is well supplied by three relations of mine from Norfolk. My cousin Johnson, an

aunt¹ of his, and his sister.² I love them all dearly, and am well contented to resign to them the place in my attentions so lately occupied by the chiefs of Greece and Troy. His aunt and I have spent many a merry day together, when we were some forty years younger; and we make shift to be merry together still. His sister is a sweet young woman, graceful, good-natured, and gentle, just what I had imagined her to be before I had seen her.—Farewell.

W. C.

TO DR. JAMES COGSWELL³

Weston Underwood, near Olney, Bucks,
June 15, 1791.

DEAR SIR,—Your letter and obliging present from so great a distance deserved a speedier acknowledgment, and should not have wanted one so long, had not circumstances so fallen out since I received them as to make it impossible for me to write sooner. It is indeed but within this day or two that I have heard how, by the help of my bookseller, I may transmit an answer to you.

My title-page, as it well might, misled you. It speaks me of the Inner Temple, and so I am, but a member of that society only, not as an inhabitant. I live here almost at a distance of sixty miles from London, which I have not visited these eight-and-twenty years, and probably never shall again. Thus it fell out, that Mr. Morewood had sailed again for America before your parcel reached me; nor should I (it is likely) have received it at all, had not a

¹ Mrs. Balls (Harriet Donne).

² Catherine Johnson.

³ See letters of May 18, 1791, and April 25, 1793.

cousin of mine, who lives in the Temple, by good fortune received it first, and opened your letter; finding for whom it was intended, he transmitted to me both that and the parcel. Your testimony of approbation of what I have published, coming from another quarter of the globe, could not but be extremely flattering, as was your obliging notice that *The Task* had been reprinted in your city. Both volumes, I hope, have a tendency to disown vice, and promote the best interests of mankind. But how far they shall be effectual to these invaluable purposes, depends altogether on His blessing, whose truths I have endeavoured to inculcate. In the mean time I have sufficient proof that readers may be pleased, may approve, and yet lay down the book unedified.

During the last five years I have been occupied with a work of a very different nature, a translation of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into blank verse, and the work is now ready for publication. I undertook it, partly because Pope's is too lax a version, which has lately occasioned the learned of this country to call aloud for a new one, and partly because I could fall on no better expedient to amuse a mind too much addicted to melancholy.

I send you in return for the volumes with which you favoured me, three on religious subjects, popular productions that have not been long published, and that may not therefore yet have reached your country; *The Christian Officer's Panoply*, by a marine officer—*The Importance of the Manners of the Great*, and *An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World*. The two last are said to be written by a lady, Miss Hannah More, and are

universally read by people of that rank to which she addresses them. Your manners I suppose may be more pure than ours, yet it is not unlikely that even among you may be found some to whom her strictures are applicable. I return you my thanks, Sir, for the volumes you sent me, two of which I have read with pleasure, Mr. Edwards's book, and the *Conquest of Canaan*.¹ The rest I have not had time to read, except Dr. Dwight's Sermon, which pleased me almost more than any that I have either seen or heard.

I shall account a correspondence with you an honour, and remain, dear Sir, your obliged and obedient servant,

W. C.

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON

The Lodge, June 18, 1791.

MY DEAR MRS. FROG,—My best information about you is not good enough to ascertain with precision where you are to be found at present; whether you are at Lord Petre's, at Tunbridge, or elsewhere, for various have been the reports concerning your next destination. I have double merit therefore in writing, both because you are a letter in my debt, and because I am not sure that I shall be able to address this to you when I have done. But of this I am, or seem to be, tolerably sure, that you will have left London, that scene of constant bustle and engagement, and will consequently, if you seek it in good earnest, be mistress of leisure enough to answer

¹ A poem, in eleven books, by Timothy Dwight, printed at Hartford, in New England, 1785; reprinted in London for J. Johnson, in 1788. Cowper reviewed the work in the *Analytical Review*.

me should this ever reach you. I am now once more an idle man. This, indeed, my letter bespeaks, for who that was not idle would write or think of writing on so forlorn a hope, and so absolutely at a venture? But Homer is all printed, the binders are putting him in boards, and on the first of next month he will make his public entry. Thus are my hands vacant and my head also; vacant indeed to a degree that would be irksome after being so long habituated to employment, had it not fortunately happened that just at this moment three cousins of mine are in the house who arrived about a week since from Norfolk. Johnny of Norfolk, whom you know; his sister, whom you do not know, but who, I am persuaded, will please you much if you ever should; and an aunt of theirs, in all respects worthy to make the agreeable duet a trio. With these, my kindred, I console myself for the loss of the old Grecian, and with these I unbend my mind, which may not fare worse for a little relaxation after such a long and constant exercise. They have taken a great liking to Weston, and, the world being all before them where to seek their place of rest, would settle here if it were possible; but after looking to the right and left have found nothing that seems very alluring, at least in the shape of a mansion. The empty house in the middle of the village is a dungeon, the house occupied by Mr. Socket is likely to be still so occupied, and the house in which Mr. Morley lived is at present a house that may be said to belong to nobody. On a notion that it was Mr. Frog's property, we conducted them to it yester-

day, when, after surveying it from top to bottom, they found it such as being put into repair would have suited them, and we well hoped our point accomplished; but in the evening came the Doctor, who dashed our hopes by informing us that the house is not Mr. Throckmorton's. Write to me soon if you love me, if it be only to tell me you are well, and when we shall see you again. Has your bill at last succeeded? That it has passed I know, but has it passed in such a shape as makes it serviceable, or have they docked and curtailed it in such a manner as to have made it nothing worth? These are all interesting topics; and now that I have not only written you a letter but furnished you also with material for an answer, with Mrs. Unwin's best compliments and Johnny's, I shall take my leave, wishing you well at the Hall again, and assuring you with great truth that I am, affectionately yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH

The Lodge, June 23, 1791.

SEND me a draft, my dearest coz, for as much money as I hope thou hast by this time received on my account, viz. from Anonymous, and viz. from Wm. Cowper, for we are driven to our last guinea. Let me have it by Sunday's post, lest we become absolutely insolvent.

We have received beef, tongues, and tea,
And certainly from none but thee;
Therefore with all our power of lungs,
Thanks for beef, and tea, and tongues!

As I said, so it proves. I told you that I
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should like our guests when they had been here a day or two, and accordingly I like them so well now that it is impossible to like them better. Mrs. Balls is an unaffected, plain-dressing, good-tempered, cheerful, motherly sort of a body, and has the affection of a parent for her niece and nephew. Her niece is an amiable young woman in all respects, a handsome likeness of Johnny, and with a smile so like my mother's, that in this cousin she seems almost restored to me again. I would that she had better health, but she has suffered sadly in her constitution by divers causes, and especially by nursing her father in his last illness, from whose side she stirred not till he expired. Johnny, with whom I have been always delighted, is also so much in love with me that no place in the world will suit him to live in at present, except Weston. Where he lives his sister will live likewise, and their aunt is under promise to live with them, at least till Catherine shall have attained under her tuition some competent share of skill in the art of house-keeping. They have looked at a house, the next but one to ours, and like it. You may perhaps remember it: it is an old house with *girt* casement windows, and has a fir tree in the little court in front of it. Here they purpose to settle, if Aunt Bodham, who is most affectionately attached to them all, can be persuaded not to break her heart about it. Of this there are some hopes, because, did they live in Norfolk, they would neither live with her, nor even in her neighbourhood, but at thirty miles distance. Johnny is writing to her now with a view to reconcile her to the measure, and should he succeed,

the house will be hired immediately. It will please thee, I think, to know that we are likely to have our solitary situation a little enlivened, and therefore I have given thee this detail of the matter.

I told thee, I believe, that my work is to be published on the 1st of July. So Johnson purposed when I heard from him last, but whether he will so perform or not must be left to time to discover. I see not what should hinder it. He has not yet made known on what terms he will treat with me for the copy. Perhaps he will stay till he has had an opportunity in some measure to learn the world's opinion of it, to which I have no objection. I do not wish more than a just price for it, but should be sorry to take less; and there will be danger of either too much or too little till the public shall have stamped its value.

My chief distress at present is that I cannot write, at least can write nothing that will satisfy myself. I have made once or twice a beginning, and, disgusted with what I have done, have dropped it. I have a subject, and a subject for a long work,—a subject that I like, and that will suggest much poetical matter.—Mr Buchanan gave it me, and it is called *The Four Ages of Man.*¹—But I had need to have many more ages before me unless I can write on it to better purpose.

With affectionate compliments from our guests, and with Mrs. Unwin's kindest remembrances, I remain, dearest coz, ever thine,

WM. COWPER.

¹ See Letter of 11 May, 1791. Of this poem only thirty-eight lines were written.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

June 24, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Considering the multiplicity of your engagements, and the importance, no doubt, of most of them, I am bound to set the higher value on your letters; and instead of grumbling that they come seldom, to be thankful to you that they come at all. You are now going into the country, where, I presume, you will have less to do; and I am rid of Homer. Let us try, therefore, if in the interval between the present hour and the next busy season (for I, too, if I live, shall probably be occupied again), we can continue to exchange letters more frequently than for some time past.

You do justice to me and Mrs. Unwin, when you assure yourself that to hear of your health will give us pleasure: I know not, in truth, whose health and well-being could give us more. The years that we have seen together will never be out of our remembrance; and so long as we remember them, we must remember you with affection. In the pulpit, and out of the pulpit, you have laboured in every possible way to serve us; and we must have a short memory indeed for the kindness of a friend, could we, by any means, become forgetful of yours. It would grieve me more than it does, to hear you complain of the effects of time, were not I also myself the subject of them. While he is wearing out you, and other dear friends of mine, he spares not me; for which I ought to account myself obliged to him, since I should otherwise be in danger of surviving all that I have ever loved—the

most melancholy lot that can befall a mortal. God knows what will be my doom hereafter; but precious as life necessarily seems to a mind doubtful of its future happiness, I love not the world, I trust, so much as to wish a place in it, when all my beloved shall have left it.

You speak of your late loss in a manner that affected me much; and when I read that part of your letter, I mourned with you, and for you. But surely, I said to myself, no man had ever less reason to charge his conduct to a wife with any thing blame-worthy. Thoughts of that complexion, however, are no doubt extremely natural on the occasion of such a loss; and a man seems not to have valued sufficiently, when he possesses it no longer, what, while he possessed it, he valued more than life. I am mistaken, too, or you can recollect a time when you had fears, and such as became a Christian, of loving too much; and it is likely that you have even prayed to be preserved from doing so. I suggest this to you as a plea against those self-accusations, which I am satisfied that you do not deserve, and as an effectual answer to them all. You may do well, too, to consider, that had the deceased been the survivor, she would have charged herself in the same manner; and I am sure you will acknowledge, without any sufficient reason. The truth is, that you both loved at least as much as you ought, and I dare say had not a friend in the world who did not frequently observe it. To love just enough, and not a bit too much, is not for creatures who can do nothing well. If we fail in duties less arduous, how should we succeeded in this, the most arduous of all?

As to Jenny Raban, we have seen nothing of her. Either she forgot your injunction to call on us, or for some reason or other did not choose it.

I am glad to learn from yourself that you are about to quit a scene that probably keeps your tender recollections too much alive. Another place and other company may have their uses; and while your church is undergoing repair, its minister may be repaired also.

As to Homer, I am sensible that, except as an amusement, he was never worth my meddling with; but, as an amusement, he was to me invaluable. As such, he served me more than five years; and, in that respect, I know not where I shall find his equal. You oblige me by saying, that you will read him for my sake. I verily think that any person of a spiritual turn may read him to some advantage. He may suggest reflections that may not be unserviceable even in a sermon; for I know not where we can find more striking exemplars of the pride, the arrogance, and the insignificance of man; at the same time that, by ascribing all events to a divine interposition, he inculcates constantly the belief of a Providence; insists much on the duty of charity towards the poor and the stranger; on the respect that is due to superiors, and to our seniors in particular; and on the expedience and necessity of prayer and piety towards the gods; a piety mistaken, indeed, in its object, but exemplary for the punctuality of its performance. Thousands, who will not learn from Scripture to ask a blessing either on their actions or on their food, may learn it, if they please, from Homer.

My Norfolk cousins are now with us. We are both as well as usual; and with our affectionate remembrances to Miss Catlett,—I remain, sincerely yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH

The Lodge, June 26, 1791.

MANY thanks, my cousin, for the bills, which arrived safe, with all their accompaniments. Money is never unwelcome here, but at this time is especially welcome, when servants' wages and house-rent call for it. Mrs. Unwin enjoins me particularly to make you her affectionate acknowledgments both for the bonnet materials and for directions how to make the bonnet.

I am glad that Johnson waited on you, and glad that he acquitted himself so well in your presence; glad too, that he likes my prose, and filled with wonder that he likes my letters, because to him I have hardly sent any but letters of jobation. I verily believe that though a bookseller, he has in him the soul of a gentleman. Such strange combinations sometimes happen, and such a one may have happened in his instance. We shall see.

Johnny Higgins shall have his waistcoat tomorrow, together with a note in which I will tell him all that you say concerning his performance in the drawing way. Your gift will not be the less acceptable to him because, being in mourning, he cannot wear it at present. It is perfectly elegant, and he will always be, and will

always have cause to be, proud of it. He mourns for his mother,¹ who died about three weeks since, which, when I wrote last, I forgot to mention. You know, I believe, that she had ill health, and was subject to violent pains in her stomach. A fit of that sort seized her; she was attended by a nurse in the night, whom she ordered down stairs to get her some broth, and when the woman returned she was dead.

It gives us true pleasure that you interest yourself so much in the state of our turnpike. Learn then the present state of it. From Gayhurst to Weston the road is a gravel-walk, but Weston itself is at present in a chaotic condition. About three weeks since they dug up the street, and having done so, left it. But it will not continue long in such disorder, and when you see it next you will find the village wonderfully improved. Already they have filled up two abominable ponds, more foetid than any human nostrils could endure; they were to be found, as you must remember, one just under Farmer Archer's window, and the other a little beyond it. Covered drains are to be made wherever drains are wanted, and the causey is to be new-laid. When all this is done and the road well gravelled, we will hold our heads as high as any villagers in the kingdom. At the present time they are at work on the road from Weston to Olney. Olney is also itself in a state of beautification, and the road between Olney

¹ Mary Higgins. She died 4th June 1791. Cowper wrote as inscription for her monument in Weston Church the lines beginning :—

‘Laurels may flourish round the Conqueror’s Tomb.’

See Globe Ed., p. 378.

and Bedford is, I believe, nearly finished, but that I have never seen. The sooner you come to look at these things with your own eyes, the better.

I have hardly left myself room to tell you a story which yet I must tell, but as briefly as possible. While I reposed myself yesterday evening in the shop of Mr. Palmer,¹ lying at my length on the counter, a labouring man came in. He wanted a hat for his boy, and having bought one at two shillings, said he must have a handkerchief for himself, a silk one, to wear about his neck on Sundays. After much bargaining he suited himself with one at last for four shillings and sixpence. I liked the man's looks, and having just one shilling in my purse, I held it to him, saying: 'Here, honest friend, here's something towards paying for your purchase!' He took the shilling and looked at me steadily for a long time, saying nothing. At last his surprise burst forth in these words—'I never saw such a gentleman in my life!' He then faced about, and was again for a long time silent; but at last, turning to me again, he said—'If I had known you had been so stout I would have had a better.' Mr. Andrews told him that the cutting off would make no difference to him, and he might have a better if he pleased, so he took one at the price of five shillings, and went away all astonishment at my great bounty. I have learned since that he is a very worthy industrious fellow, and has a mother between seventy and eighty, who walks every Sunday eight miles to hearing, as they call it, and back again. This is another instance that my skill in physiognomy

¹ Opposite Cowper's old house at Olney.

never deceives me.—Adieu, my dearest coz. With the love of all here, I remain ever thine,

W.M. COWPER.

P.S.—Since I heard of Mrs. Madan's death I have thought much of her daughter Sally, and rejoice to hear that she is at last provided for.—We packed the drawings as well as we could, but the band-box was old and crazy ; and was crushed, I suppose, in the hamper. I sent them that you might get them framed at your best leisure, for here we cannot frame them.

TO LADY HESKETH

The Lodge, June 28, 1791.

MY DEAREST COZ,—I write now merely to tell you that the tea came safe, and is excellent, for which you have my best thanks ;—and to entreat you to send forthwith either in a Bank-note or draft on your own bank, the money you have in hand for me. It is the season of payment of servants' wages, and we are liable also, or shall be shortly, to some demands of rent, which will make the receipt of said money very convenient.

We proceed much in the usual rate, only Mrs. Unwin's constant pain in her side has at last produced a tumour on that part, which distresses me more than it does her. Knowing neither the cause, nor in what it is likely to terminate, I cannot but be very uneasy about it. It has but lately appeared ; as she describes it, it is half a hand's breadth in dimension, and projects to about a hand's thickness. If you should happen to see your skilful apothecary,

whose name I cannot now recover, but whom Mr. Rose consulted, I should be glad if you would ask his opinion. In the mean time I shall take the first opportunity to consult Mr. Gregson.

I expect to see shortly Mrs. Bodham here and her husband. If they come, which depends on the recovery of a relation of theirs, at present very much indisposed, they will stay, I imagine, a parson's week,¹ that is to say, about a fortnight and no longer. September in the mean time will be approaching, and will arrive welcome, most welcome to us, because it promises to bring you with it. I dreamed last night that you are at Bath: your next will inform me whether this is true or false. My dream was owing perhaps merely to your longer silence than usual, for which not knowing how to account while I am waking, I endeavoured to solve the difficulty in my sleep.—Adieu! Let me hear from thee, and believe me, as I know thou dost, with Mrs. Unwin's affectionate compliments.—Ever thine,

W.M. COWPER.

The swelling is under the ribs at the side of the stomach, on the right.

Cowper's *Translation of Homer*² was published on 1st July 1791.

¹ From a Monday till the Saturday week following.

² Cowper's translation was commenced 21st November 1784, and completed 25th August 1790. Consequently it took nearly six years. On 8th September 1790 it was carried to London. Then Cowper gave it a second revision, which he concluded 4th March 1791. He continued to revise the work almost up to the time of his death, with a view to a second edition.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

7 July 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Having given you yesterday only a postscript in answer to yours, I now sit down less in haste to answer it more at large.

It is very likely that my view of Mr. Johnson's first offer might be both perplexed and injurious to him. But such as it was, I sent it, and it was the view, which not only I, who am a perfect fool in business, but Mrs. Unwin also, and the relations of mine now with me entertained, as well as myself. Awkwardness and extreme incompetence in all business is my misfortune, but avarice, I believe, is not my fault; and this I say, not to commend myself, but to lighten the labour of your task as much as possible. Troublesome it must be at best, and would be doubly so should I wish for any thing unreasonable. This however is not the case. So far from it, that I should be as sorry to receive from Johnson more than he would think himself obliged to give to another, in consideration of any thing past between him and me, as I should be to receive less than on the terms of common market-price I am entitled to.

I am well contented with his second offer, because, considering that the subscription money will be more than enough to indemnify him, I do not see how he should possibly be a loser by it. Supposing, I mean, the second payments to be made, and the remaining copies to find purchasers.

If you see good therefore, I am ready to close with him on this second offer, and that done, shall trouble you once more respecting the copyright. You must

advise me what to do with it. Whether to keep it till the fortune of my work may be more probably conjectured, or whether to sell it now. Whether to dispose of the whole, or to retain a share in it? Direct me in all, for I am in these matters *non compos.*

I wrote to Johnson yesterday after closing my letter to you, and desired him to send a copy to Mr. Griffiths.¹

You may depend on my taking the first opportunity to select, etc., as we agreed should be done when we conversed together on that subject. But the publication of any such remarks on the work as you propose will be a trouble that I presume you will not have to encounter yet. You will know the fittest time.

I write, as it happens, with much interruption, so as hardly to know if I have expressed my own meaning. Give my best love to Mr. Hill if you see him, and my thanks, so justly due to him, for the interest he takes in all my matters.

We shall see you, I hope, in Septbr.—In the mean time, I remain, with Mrs. Unwin's affectionate remembrances, yours, my dear friend, most truly,

Wm. COWPER.

TO MRS. BODHAM

Weston Underwood, July 7, 1791.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,—Most true it is, however strange, that on the twenty-fifth of last month I wrote you a long letter, and verily thought I had

¹ Mr. Ralph Griffiths of the *Monthly Review*. See vol. i. p. 484.

sent it. But opening my desk the day before yesterday, there I found it. Such a memory have I,—a good one never, but at present worse than usual, my head being filled with the cares of publication, and the bargain that I am making with my bookseller.

I am sorry that through this forgetfulness of mine you were disappointed, otherwise should not at all regret that my letter never reached you; for it consisted principally of such reasons as I could muster to induce you to consent to a favourite measure to which you have consented without them. Your kindness, and self-denying disinterestedness on this occasion, have endeared you to us all, if possible, still the more, and are truly worthy of the Rose that used to sit smiling on my knee, I will not say how many years ago.

Make no apologies, my dear, that thou dost not write more frequently. Write when thou canst, and I shall be satisfied. I am sensible, as I believe I have already told you, that there is an awkwardness in writing to those with whom we have hardly ever conversed, in consideration of which I feel myself not at all inclined either to wonder at or to blame your silence. At the same time be it known to you that you must not take encouragement, from this my great moderation, to write less frequently than you might, lest, disuse increasing the labour, you should at last write not at all.

That I should visit Norfolk at present is not possible:—I have heretofore pleaded my engagement to Homer as the reason, and a reason it was, while it subsisted, that was absolutely insurmountable. But there are still other impediments which

it would neither be pleasant to me to relate, nor to you to know, and which could not well be comprised in a letter. Let it suffice for me to say, that could they be imparted, you would admit the force of them. It shall be our mutual consolation that if we cannot meet at Mattishall, at least we may meet at Weston, and that we shall meet here with double satisfaction, being now so numerous.

Your sister is well ; Kitty I think better than when she came, and Johnny ails nothing, except that if he eat a little more supper than usual he is apt to be riotous in his sleep. We have an excellent physician¹ at Northampton, whom our dear Catharine wishes to consult, and I have recommended it to Johnny to consult him at the same time. His nocturnal ailment is, I dare say, within the reach of medical advice, and because it may happen sometime or other to be very hurtful to him I heartily wish him cured of it. Light suppers and early rising perhaps might alone be sufficient ;—but the latter is a difficulty that threatens not to be easily surmounted.

We are all of one mind respecting you, therefore I send the love of all, though I shall see none of the party till breakfast calls us together. Great preparation is making in the empty house. The spiders have no rest, and hardly a web is to be seen, where lately there were thousands.

I am, my dearest cousin, with best respects to Mr. Bodham, most affectionately yours,

W.M. COWPER.

¹ Dr. Kerr.

TO LADY HESKETH

The Lodge, July 11, 1791.

MY DEAREST COZ,—Your draft is safe in our possession, and will soon be out of it, that is to say, will soon be negotiated. Many thanks for that, and still more for your kindness in bidding me draw yet again, should I have occasion. None I hope will offer. I have a purse at Johnson's, to which, if need should arise, I can recur at pleasure. The present is rather an expensive time with us, and will probably cause the consumption of some part of my loose cash in the hands of my bookseller.

I am not much better pleased with that dealer in authors than yourself. His first proposal, which was to pay me with my own money, or in other words to get my copy for nothing, not only dissatisfied but hurt me, implying, as I thought, the meanest opinion possible of my labours. For that for which an intelligent man will give nothing, can be worth nothing. The consequence was that my spirits sank considerably below par, and have but just begun to recover themselves. His second offer, which is, to pay all expenses, and to give me a thousand pounds next midsummer, leaving the copyright still in my hands, is more liberal. With this offer I have closed, and Mr. Rose will tomorrow clinch the bargain. Josephus¹ understands that Johnson will gain two hundred pounds by it, but I apprehend that he is mistaken, and that Mr. Rose is right, who estimates his gains at one. Mr. Hill's mistake, if he be mistaken, arises from

¹ Joseph Hill.

his rating the expenses of the press at only five hundred pounds, whereas Johnson rates them at six. Be that as it may, I am contented. If he gains two, I shall not grudge, and if he gains but one, considering all things, I think he will gain enough.

As to Sephus's scheme of signing the seven hundred copies in order to prevent a clandestine multiplication of them, at the same time that I feel the wisdom of it, I feel also an unsurmountable dislike of it. It would be calling Johnson a knave, and telling the public that I think him one. Now, though I do not perhaps think so highly of his liberality as some people do, and I was once myself disposed to think, yet I have no reason at present to charge him with dishonesty. I must even take my chance, as other poets do, and if I am wronged, must comfort myself with what somebody has said, —that authors are the natural prey of booksellers.

You judge right in supposing that I pity the King and Queen of France. I can truly say, that, except the late melancholy circumstances of our own (when our sovereign had lost his senses, and his wife was almost worried out of hers), no royal distresses have ever moved me so much. And still I pity them, prisoners as they are now for life, and since their late unsuccessful attempt,¹ likely to be treated more scurvily than ever. Heaven help them, for in their case all other help seems vain.

The establishment of our guests at Weston is given up; not for any impediment thrown in the way by Mrs. Bodham, for she consented with the utmost disinterestedness, to the measure, but be-

¹ Flight of Royal Family to Varennes (June 20). They returned captives to Paris, June 25.

cause on surveying accurately the house in which they must have dwelt, it was found to be so mere a ruin that it would have cost its value to make it habitable. They could only take it from year to year, for which reason the landlord would do nothing.

Many thanks for the Mediterranean hint; but unless I were a better historian than I am, there would be no proportion between the theme and my ability. It seems indeed not to be so properly a subject for one poem as for a dozen.

I was pleased with Bouillie's¹ letter, or to say truth, rather with the principles by which it was dictated. The letter itself seems too much the language of passion, and can only be cleared of the charge of extravagance by the accomplishment of its denunciations—an event, I apprehend, not much to be expected.

We are all well except poor Catharine, who yesterday consulted Dr. Kerr, and to-day is sick of his prescription. Our affectionate hearts all lay themselves at your pettitoes, and with Mrs. Unwin's best remembrances, I remain, for my own peculiar, most entirely thine,

Wm. COWPER.

The Frogs are expected here on Wednesday.

¹ François Claude Amour, Marquis de Bouillé (1739-1800). No doubt Cowper wrote 'Bouillie' and that he referred to this famous French general, so intimately associated with the Revolution and the flight of the Royal Family to Varennes. In 1791 Bouillé was in the service of Gustavus III. of Sweden. His *Mémoires sur la Révolution française* were first published in London in English in 1797 and in Paris in French in 1801, but Cowper refers to a *Letter* written immediately after his flight from France, and when he found himself out of favour alike with *Emigrés* and with Republicans.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

July 22, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I did not foresee, when I challenged you to a brisker correspondence, that a new engagement of all my leisure was at hand ; —a new, and yet an old one. An interleaved copy of my Homer arrived soon after from Johnson, in which he recommended it to me to make any alterations that might yet be expedient, with a view to another impression. The alterations that I make are indeed but few, and they are also short ; not more, perhaps, than half a line in two thousand. But the lines are, I suppose, nearly forty thousand in all ; and to revise them critically must consequently be a work of labour. I suspend it, however, for your sake, till the present sheet be filled, and that I may not seem to shrink from my own offer.

Mr. Bean has told me that he saw you at Bedford, and gave us your reasons for not coming our way. It is well, so far as your own comfortable lodging and our gratification were concerned, that you did not ; for our house is brimful, as it has been all the summer, with my relations from Norfolk. We should all have been mortified, both you and we, had you been obliged, as you must have been, to seek a residence elsewhere.

I am sorry that Mr. Venn's labours¹ below are so near to a conclusion. I have seen few men whom I could have loved more, had opportunity been given me to know him better. So, at least,

¹ Rev. Henry Venn, famous Evangelical divine. He survived, however, for six years after this. He died 24 June 1797.

I have thought as often as I have seen him. But when I saw him last, which is some years since, he appeared then so much broken, that I could not have imagined he would last so long. Were I capable of envying, in the strict sense of the word, a good man, I should envy him, and Mr. Berridge,¹ and yourself; who have spent, and, while they last, will continue to spend your lives, in the service of the only Master worth serving; labouring always for the souls of men, and not to tickle their ears, as I do. But this I can say—God knows how much rather I would be the obscure tenant of a lath-and-plaster-cottage, with a lively sense of my interest in a Redeemer, than the most admired object of public notice without it. Alas! what is a whole poem, even one of Homer's, compared with a single aspiration that finds its way immediately to God, though clothed in ordinary language, or perhaps not articulated at all. These are my sentiments as much as ever they were, though my days are all running to waste among Greeks and Trojans. The night cometh, when no man can work; and if I am ordained to work to better purpose, that desirable period cannot be very distant. My day is beginning to shut in, as every man's must, who is on the verge of sixty.

All the leisure that I have had of late for thinking has been given to the riots at Birmingham.² What a horrid zeal for the church, and

¹ Rev. John Berridge, of Everton, the 'Everton Ass,' as he deprecatingly called himself. Evangelical divine.

² Priestley Riots (14 July 1791). The sympathisers with the French Revolution while celebrating the capture of the Bastille were attacked by the upholders of Church and King. The mob broke into Priestley's house and destroyed all its contents.

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what a horrid loyalty to government, have manifested themselves there! How little do they dream that they could not have dishonoured their idol the Establishment more, and that the great Bishop of souls Himself with abhorrence rejects their service! But I have not time to enlarge; —breakfast calls me; and all my post-breakfast time must be given to poetry. Adieu! Most truly yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL, BRIGHTON, SUSSEX

Weston, July 6, 1791.

MY DEAR MR. BULL,—Mindful of my promise I take the pen, though fearing, and with reason enough, that the performance will be hardly worth the postage. Such as it is however, here it comes, and if you like it not, you must thank yourself for it.

I have blest myself on your account that you are at Brighton and not at Birmingham, where it seems they are so loyal and so pious that they show no mercy to dissenters. How can you continue in a persuasion so offensive to the wise and good! Do you not yet perceive that the Bishops themselves hate you not more than the very blacksmith of the establishment, and will you not endeavour to get the better of your aversion to red-nosed singing men and organs? Come — be received into the bosom of mother-church, so shall you never want a jig for your amusement on Sundays, and shall save perhaps your academy from a conflagration.

As for me, I go on at the old rate, giving all my time to Homer, who I suppose was a Pres-

byterian too, for I understand that the church of England will by no means acknowledge him as one of hers. He, I say, has all my time, except a little that I give every day to no very cheering prospects of futurity. I would I were a Hottentot, or even a dissenter, so that my views of a hereafter were more comfortable. But such as I am, hope, if it please God, may visit even me; and should we ever meet again, possibly we may part no more. Then, if Presbyterians ever find the way to heaven, you and I may know each other in that better world, and rejoice in the recital of the terrible things that we endured in this. I will wager sixpence with you now, that when that day comes, you shall acknowledge my story a more wonderful one than yours; — only order your executors to put sixpence in your mouth when they bury you, that you may have wherewithal to pay me.

I have received a long letter from an unknown somebody, filled with the highest eulogiums on my Homer. This has raised my spirits and is the true cause of all the merriment with which I have greeted you this morning. Pardon me, as Vellum says in the Comedy, for being jocular. Mrs. Unwin joins me in love to yourself and your very good son, and we both hope and both sincerely wish to hear of Mrs. Bull's recovery.—Yours affectionately,

Wm. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

Weston, Aug. 2, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I was much obliged, and still feel myself much obliged to Lady Bagot,

for the visit with which she favoured me. Had it been possible that I could have seen Lord Bagot too, I should have been completely happy. For, as it happened, I was that morning in better spirits than usual ; and though I arrived late, and after a long walk, and extremely hot, which is a circumstance very apt to disconcert me, yet I was not disconcerted half so much as I generally am at the sight of a stranger, especially of a stranger lady, and more especially at the sight of a stranger lady of quality. When the servant told me that Lady Bagot was in the parlour, I felt my spirits sink ten degrees ; but the moment I saw her, at least when I had been a minute in her company, I felt them rise again, and they soon rose even above their former pitch. I know two ladies of fashion now, whose manners have this effect upon me. The Lady in question, and the Lady Spencer. I am a shy animal, and want much kindness to make me easy. Such I shall be to my dying day.

Here sit *I*, calling myself *shy*, yet have just published by the *by*, two great volumes of poetry.

This reminds me of Ranger's observation in *The Suspicious Husband*,¹ who says to somebody, I forget whom—' *There is a degree of assurance in you modest men, that we impudent fellows can never arrive at !*'—Assurance indeed ! Have you seen 'em ? What do you think they are ? Nothing less, I can tell you, than a translation of Homer. Of the sublimest poet in the world. That's all. Can I ever have the impudence to call myself shy again ?

You live, I think, in the neighbourhood of Bir-

¹ *The Suspicious Husband*, a comedy by Benjamin Hoadly (1706-1757), produced in 1747. Ranger is one of the characters.

mingham? What must you not have felt on the late alarming occasion! You, I suppose, could see the fires from your windows. We, who only heard the news of them, have trembled. Never sure was religious zeal more terribly manifested, or more to the prejudice of its own cause.

Adieu, my dear friend.—I am, with Mrs. Unwin's best compliments, ever yours,

W. C.

TO MRS. KING

Weston Underwood, Aug. 4, 1791.

MY DEAR MADAM,—Your last letter, which gave us so unfavourable an account of your health, and which did not speak much more comfortably of Mr. King's, affected us with much concern. Of Dr. Raitt we may say in the words of Milton,

'His long experience did attain
To something like prophetic strain' ;

for as he foretold to you, so he foretold to Mrs. Unwin, that though her disorders might not much threaten life, they would yet cleave to her to the last; and she and perfect health must ever be strangers to each other. Such was his prediction, and it has been hitherto accomplished. Either headache or pain in the side has been her constant companion ever since we had the pleasure of seeing you. As for myself, I cannot properly say that I *enjoy* a good state of health, though in general I have it, because I have it accompanied with frequent fits of dejection, to which less health and better spirits would, perhaps, be infinitely preferable. But it pleased God that I should be born in a country where melancholy is the national

characteristic; and of a house more than commonly subject to it. To say truth, I have often wished myself a Frenchman.

N.B.—I write this in very good spirits.

You gave us so little hope in your last that we should have your company this summer at Weston, that to repeat our invitation seems almost like teasing you. I will only say, therefore, that my Norfolk friends having left us, of whose expected arrival here I believe I told you in a former letter, we should be happy could you succeed them. We now, indeed, expect Lady Hesketh, but not immediately: she seldom sees Weston till all its summer beauties are fled, and red brown and yellow have supplanted the universal verdure.

My Homer is gone forth, and I can devoutly say—Joy go with it! What place it holds in the estimation of the generality, I cannot tell, having heard no more about it since its publication than if no such work existed. I must except, however, an anonymous eulogium from some man of letters, which I received about a week ago. It was kind in a perfect stranger, as he avows himself to be, to relieve me, at so early a day, from much of the anxiety that I could not but feel on such an occasion. I should be glad to know who he is, only that I might thank him.

Mrs. Unwin, who is this moment come down to breakfast, joins me in affectionate compliments to yourself and Mr. King; and I am, my dear madam,—Most sincerely yours, Wm. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JAMES HURDIS

Weston, August 9, 1791.

MY DEAR SIR,—I never make a correspondent wait for an answer through idleness, or want of proper respect for him; but if I am silent it is because I am busy, or not well, or because I stay till something occurs, that may make my letter at least a little better than mere blank paper. I therefore write speedily in reply to yours, being at present neither much occupied, nor at all indisposed, nor forbidden by a dearth of materials.

I wish always when I have a new piece in hand to be as secret as you, and there was a time when I could be so. Then I lived the life of a solitary, was not visited by a single neighbour, because I had none with whom I could associate; nor ever had an inmate. This was when I dwelt at Olney; but since I have removed to Weston the case is different. Here I am visited by all around me, and study in a room exposed to all manner of inroads. It is on the ground floor, the room in which we dine, and in which I am sure to be found by all who seek me. They find me generally at my desk, and with my work, whatever it be, before me, unless perhaps I have conjured it into its hiding place before they have had time to enter. This, however, is not always the case, and consequently, sooner or later, I cannot fail to be detected. Possibly you, who I suppose have a snug study, would find it impracticable to attend to anything closely in an apartment exposed as mine; but use has made it familiar to me, and so familiar, that neither servants going and coming disconcert me; not even if a lady, with an oblique glance of her eye, catches two or

three lines of my ms., do I feel myself inclined to blush, though naturally the shyest of mankind.

You did well, I believe, to cashier the subject of which you gave me a recital. It certainly wants those *agrémens*, which are necessary to the success of any subject in verse. It is a curious story, and so far as the poor young lady was concerned, a very affecting one; but there is a coarseness in the character of the hero, that would have spoiled all. In fact, I find it myself a much easier matter to write, than to get a convenient theme to write on.

I am obliged to you for comparing me, as you go, both with Pope and with Homer. It is impossible in any other way of management to know whether the translation be well executed or not, and if well, in what degree. It was in the course of such a process, that I first became dissatisfied with Pope. More than thirty years since, and when I was a young Templar, I accompanied him with his original, line by line, through both poems. A fellow student of mine, a person of fine classic taste,¹ joined himself with me in the labour. We were neither of us, as you may imagine, very diligent in our proper business.

I shall be glad if my reviewers, whosoever they may be, will be at the pains to read me as you do. I want no praise that I am not entitled to; but of that to which I am entitled I should be loth to lose a tittle, having worked hard to earn it.

I would heartily second the Bishop of Salisbury² in recommending to you a close pursuit of your Hebrew studies, were it not that I wish you to

¹ 'A slothful and forgetful fellow named Alston.'—Cowper.

² Dr. Douglas (1721-1807), who vindicated Milton from the charge of plagiarism brought forward by Lander.

publish what I may understand. Do both, and I shall be satisfied.

Your remarks, if I may but receive them soon enough to serve me in case of a new edition, will be extremely welcome.

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON

Weston, August 9, 1791.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,—The little that I have heard about Homer myself has been equally, or more flattering than Dr. ——'s intelligence, so that I have good reason to hope that I have not studied the old Grecian, and how to dress him, so long and so intensely, to no purpose. At present I am idle, both on account of my eyes, and because I know not to what to attach myself in particular. Many different plans and projects are recommended to me. Some call aloud for original verse, others for more translation, and others for other things. Providence, I hope, will direct me in my choice; for other guide I have none, nor wish for another.

God bless you, my dearest Johnny.

W. C.

TO LORD THURLOW

August, 1791.

MY LORD,—A letter reached me yesterday from Henry Cowper, enclosing another from your Lordship to himself, of which a passage in my work formed the subject. It gave me the greatest pleasure; your strictures are perfectly just, and here follows the speech of Achilles accommodated to them . . .

I did not expect to find your Lordship on the side

of rhyme, remembering well with how much energy and interest I have heard you repeat passages from the *Paradise Lost*, which you could not have recited as you did, unless you had been perfectly sensible of their music. It comforts me, therefore, to know that if you have an ear for rhyme, you have an ear for blank verse also.

It seems to me that I may justly complain of rhyme as an inconvenience in translation, even though I assert in the sequel that to me it has been easier to rhyme than to write without, because I always suppose a rhyming translator to ramble, and always obliged to do so. Yet I allow your Lordship's version of this speech of Achilles to be very close, and closer much than mine. But I believe that should either your Lordship or I give them burnish or elevation, your lines would be found, in measure as they required stateliness, to have lost the merit of fidelity. In which case nothing more would be done than Pope has done already.

I cannot ask your Lordship to proceed in your strictures, though I should be happy to receive more of them. Perhaps it is possible that when you retire into the country, you may now and then amuse yourself with my translation. Should your remarks reach me, I promise faithfully that they shall be all most welcome, not only as yours, but because I am sure my work will be the better for them.

With sincere and fervent wishes for your Lordship's health and happiness.—I remain, my Lord,
etc., W. C.

TO WILLIAM COWPER FROM LORD THURLOW

August 1791.

DEAR COWPER,—On coming to town this morning, I was surprised particularly at receiving from you an answer to a scrawl I sent Harry,¹ which I have forgot too much to resume now. But I think I could not mean to patronise rhyme. I have fancied that it was introduced to mark the measure in modern languages, because they are less numerous² and metrical than the ancient; and the name seems to import as much. Perhaps there was melody in ancient song, without straining it to musical notes; as the common Greek pronunciation is said to have had the compass of five parts of an octave. But surely that word is only figuratively applied to modern poetry; euphony seems to be the highest term it will bear. I have fancied also, that euphony is an impression derived a good deal from habit, rather than suggested by nature; therefore in some degree accidental, and consequently conventional. Else why can't we bear a drama with rhyme; or the French, one without it? Suppose the *Rape of the Lock*, *Windsor Forest*, *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and many other little poems which please, stripped of the rhyme, which might easily be done, would they please as well? It would be unfair to treat rondeaus, ballads, and odes in the same manner, because rhyme makes in some sort a part of the conceit. It was this way of thinking which made me suppose that habitual prejudice would miss the rhyme; and that neither Dryden or Pope would have dared to give their great authors in blank verse.

¹ Son of General Cowper.

² Both Waller and Dryden used 'numerous' in this sense = 'harmonious.'

I wondered to hear you say you thought rhyme easier in original compositions ; but you explained it, that you could go further a-field, if you were pushed for want of a rhyme. An expression preferred for the sake of the rhyme looks as if it were worth more than you allow. But to be sure in translation the necessity of rhyme imposes very heavy fetters upon those who mean translation, not paraphrase. Our common heroic metre is enough—the pure iambic, bearing only a sparing introduction of spondees, trochees, etc., to vary the measure.

Mere translation I take to be impossible, if no metre were required. But the difference of the iambic and heroic measure destroys that at once. It is also impossible to obtain the same sense from a dead language, and an ancient author, which those of his own time and country conceived ; words and phrases contract, from time and use, such strong shades of difference from their original import. In a living language, with the familiarity of a whole life, it is not easy to conceive truly the actual sense of current expressions, much less of older authors. No two languages furnish *equipollent* words ; their phrases differ, their syntax and their idioms still more widely. But a translation strictly so called requires an exact conformity in all those particulars, and also in numbers : therefore it is impossible. I really think at present, notwithstanding the opinion expressed in your Preface, that a translator asks himself a good question, How would my author have expressed the sentence, I am turning, in English ? for every idea conveyed in the original should be expressed in English, as literally and fully as the genius and use and character of the language will admit of.

In the passage before us ἄττα was the fondling expression of childhood to its parent; and to those who first translated the lines conveyed feelingly that amiable sentiment. Γεραιέ expressed the reverence which naturally accrues to age.

Διοτρεφής implies an history. Hospitality was an article of religion, strangers were supposed to be sent by God, and honoured accordingly. Jove's altar was placed in ξενοδοκεῖον. Phœnix had been describing that as his situation in the court of Peleus: and his Διοτρεφές refers to it.—But you must not translate that literally—

'Old daddy Phœnix, a God-send for us to maintain.'

Precious limbs was at first an expression of great feeling; till vagabonds, draymen, etc. brought upon it the character of coarseness and ridicule.¹

It would run to great length, if I were to go through this one speech thus—this is enough for example of my idea, and to prove the necessity of further deviation; which still is departing from the author, and justifiable only by strong necessity, such as should not be admitted, till the sense of the original had been laboured to the utmost, and been found irreducible.

I will end this by giving you the strictest translation I can invent, leaving you the double task of bringing it closer, and of polishing it into the style of poetry.

Ah! Phœnix, aged Father, guest of Jove!
I relish no such honours: for my hope
Is to be honour'd by Jove's fated will,
Which keeps me close beside these sable ships,

¹ Yet Locke (see Johnson's *Dictionary*) used the word 'as an expression of contempt or irony.'

Long as the breath shall in my bosom stay,
 Or as my precious knees retain their spring.
 Further I say,—and cast it in your mind !
 Melt not my spirit down by weeping thus,
 And wailing only for that great man's sake,
 Atrides : neither ought you love that man,
 Lest I should hate the friend, I love so well.
 With me united 'tis your nobler part
 To gall his spirit, who has galled mine.
 With me reign equal, half my honours share.
 These will report ; stay you here, and repose
 On a soft bed ; and with the beaming morn
 Consult we, whether to go home, or stay.

I have thought that *hero* has contracted a different sense than it had in Homer's time, and is better rendered *great man*: but I am aware that the encliticks and other little words, falsely called expletives, are not introduced even so much as the genius of our language would admit. The euphony I leave entirely to you.—Adieu !

TO LORD THURLOW

Aug. 1791.

MY LORD,—We are of one mind as to the agreeable effect of rhyme or euphony in the lighter kinds of poetry. The pieces which your Lordship mentions would certainly be spoiled by the loss of it, and so would all such. The *Alma*¹ would lose all its neatness and smartness, and *Hudibras* all its humour. But in grave poems of extreme length I apprehend that the case is different. Long before I thought of commencing poet myself, I have complained and heard others complain of the weariness of such poems. Not that I suppose that tedium the effect of rhyme itself, but rather of the perpetual

¹ Prior's poem : *Alma; or the Progress of the Mind* (1733).

recurrence of the same pause and cadence, unavoidable in the English couplet.

I hope I may say truly, it was not in a spirit of presumption that I undertook to do what, in your Lordship's opinion, neither Dryden or Pope would have dared to do. On the contrary, I see not how I could have escaped that imputation, had I followed Pope in his own way. A closer translation was called for. I verily believed that rhyme had betrayed Pope into *his* deviations. For me therefore to have used his mode of versifying, would have been to expose myself to the same miscarriage, at the same time that I had not his talents to atone for it.

I agree with your Lordship that a translation perfectly close is impossible, because time has sunk the original strict import of a thousand phrases, and we have no means of recovering it. But if we cannot be unimpeachably faithful, that is no reason why we should not be as faithful as we can; and if blank verse afford the fairest chance, then it claims the preference,

Your Lordship, I will venture to say, can command me nothing in which I will not obey with the greatest alacrity.

Eἰ δύναμαι τέλεσαι γε καὶ εἰ τετελέσμενον ἔστι.

But when, having made as close a translation as even you can invent, you enjoin me to make it still closer, and in rhyme too, I can only reply, as Horace to Augustus,

. *cupidum, pater optime, vires*
Deficiunt

I have not treacherously departed from my pattern that I might seem to give some proof of the just-

ness of my own opinion, but have fairly and honestly adhered as closely to it as I could. Yet your Lordship will not have to compliment me on my success, either in respect of the poetical merit of many lines, or of their fidelity. They have just enough of each to make them deficient in the other.

} } }

Oh Phœnix, father, friend, guest sent from Jove !
 Me no such honours as they yield can move,
 For I expect my honours from above.
 Here Jove has fix'd me ; and while breath and sense
 Have place within me, I will never hence.
 Hear too, and mark me well—Haunt not mine ears
 With sighs, nor seek to melt me with thy tears
 For yonder chief, lest urging such a plea
 Through love of him, thou hateful prove to me.
 Thy friendship for thy friend shall brighter shine
 Wounding his spirit who has wounded mine.
 Divide with me the honours of my throne—
 These shall return, and make their tidings known :
 But go not thou !—thy couch shall here be dress'd
 With softest fleeces for thy easy rest,
 And with the earliest blush of opening day
 We will consult to seek our home, or stay.

Since I wrote these I have looked at Pope's. I am certainly somewhat closer to the original than he, but further I say not.—I shall wait with impatience for your Lordship's conclusions from these premises, and remain in the mean time with great truth, my Lord, etc.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM COWPER FROM LORD THURLOW

Aug. 1791.

DEAR COWPER,—I have received your letter on my journey through London, and as the chaise waits I shall be short.

I did not mean it as a sign of any presumption

that you have attempted what neither Dryden nor Pope would have dared; but merely as a proof of their addiction to rhyme; for I am clearly convinced that Homer may be better translated than into rhyme, and that you have succeeded in the places I have looked into.¹ But I have fancied that it might have been still more literal, preserving the ease of genuine English and melody, and some degree of that elevation which Homer derives from simplicity. But I could not do it, or even near enough to form a judgment, or more than a fancy about it. Nor do I fancy it could be done '*stans pede in uno.*' But when the mind has been fully impregnated with the original passage, often revolving it and waiting for a happy moment may still be necessary to the best trained mind. Adieu.

TO LORD THURLOW

Aug. 1791.

MY LORD,—I haunt you with letters, but will trouble you now with a short line only to tell your Lordship how happy I am that any part of my work has pleased you.—I have a comfortable consciousness that the whole has been executed with equal industry and attention; and am, my Lord, with many thanks to you for snatching such a hasty moment to write to me,—Your Lordship's obliged and affectionate humble servant,

Wm. COWPER.

¹ It is curious that while Cowper twice afterwards (pp. 118 and 150) quotes this utterance of Lord Thurlow's, he does so correctly in neither case, and in each case differently.

TO LADY HESKETH

The Lodge, Aug. 30, 1791.

MY DEAREST COZ,—The walls of Ogressa's chamber shall be furnished as elegantly as they can be, and at little cost; and when you see them you shall cry—Bravo! Bedding we have, but two chairs will be wanting, the servants' hall having engaged all our supernumeraries. These you will either send, or give us commission to buy them. Such as will suit may be found probably at Maurice Smith's, of house-furnishing memory; and this latter course I should think the best, because they are of all things most liable to fracture in a waggon.

I know not how it can have happened that Homer is such a secret at Tunbridge, for I can tell you that his fame is on the wing, and flies rapidly. Johnson, however, seems to be clear from blame; and when you recollect that the whole edition is his by purchase, and that he has no possible way to get his money again but by the sale of it, thou thyself wilt think so. A tradesman,—an old stager too, may safely be trusted with his own interest.

I have spoken big words about Homer's fame, and bigger perhaps than my intelligence will justify, for I have not heard much, but what I have heard has been pretty much to the purpose. First, little Johnny going through Cambridge, in his way home, learned from his tutor there that it had found many admirers amongst the best-qualified judges of that university, and that they were very liberal of their praises. Secondly, Mr. Rye¹ wrote me word lately that a certain candid fair critic and excellent judge,

¹ Rev. J. Jekyll Rye—Joe Rye.

of the county of Northampton, gives it high encomiums. Thirdly, Mr. Rye came over himself from Gayhurst yesterday on purpose to tell me how much he was delighted with it. He had just been reading the sixth *Iliad*, and comparing it with Pope and with the original, and professed himself enchanted. Fourthly, Mr. Frog is much pleased with it; and fifthly, Henry Cowper¹ is bewitched with it; and sixthly, so are—you and I,—*ca suffit.*

But now if thou hast the faculty of erecting thy ears, lift them into the air, first taking off thy cap, that they may have the highest possible elevation. Mrs. Unwin says,—No, don't tell her ladyship all,—tell her only enough to raise her curiosity, that she may come the sooner to Weston to have it gratified. But I say,—Yes, I will tell her all, lest she should be overcharged and burst by the way,

The Chancellor and I, my dear, have had a correspondence on the subject of Homer. He had doubts it seems about the propriety of translating him in blank verse, and wrote to Henry to tell him so, adding a translation of his own in rhyme of the speech of Achilles to Phœnix, in the ninth book; and referring him to me, who, he said, could elevate it, and polish it, and give it the tone of Homer. Henry sent this letter to me, and I answered it in one to his lordship, but not meddling with his verses, for I remembered what happened between Gil Blas and the Archbishop of Toledo. His lordship sent me two sheets in reply, filled with arguments in favour of rhyme, which I was to answer if I could; and containing another translation of the same passage, only in blank verse, leaving it to me to give it rhyme, to make it close, and faithful, and poetical.

¹ See page 110, footnote 1.

All this I performed as best I could, and yesterday I heard from him again. In this last letter he says, —‘I am clearly convinced that Homer may be best translated *without rhyme*, and that you have succeeded in the passages I have looked into.’

Such is the candour of a wise man and a real scholar. I would to heaven that all prejudiced persons were like him!—I answered this letter immediately; and here, I suppose, our correspondence ends. Have I not made a great convert? You shall see the letters, both his and mine, when you come.

My picture hangs in the study. I will not tell thee what others think of it; but thou shalt judge for thyself. I altogether approve Mrs. Carter's¹ sentiments upon the Birmingham riots, and admire her manner of expressing them. The Frogs come down to-day, bringing Catharina with them. Mrs. Frog has caught cold, as I hear, in her journey; therefore how she may be now I know not, but before she went she was well and in excellent spirits. I rejoice that thy poor lungs can play freely, and shall be happy when they can do the same at Weston. My eyes are weak, and somewhat inflamed, and have never been well this month past.

Mrs. Unwin is tolerably well,—that is, much as usual. She joins me in best love, and in every thing that you can wish us both to feel for you.—Adieu, my dearest coz, ever thine,

Wm. COWPER.

The Homer finished, Cowper was now looking round for further employment. In the midst of his

¹ Elizabeth Carter, 1717-1806. Translator of Epictetus; writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, *The Rambler*, etc. Praised by Dr. Johnson.

indecision an offer came from Mr. Joseph Johnson the publisher. A splendid edition of Milton was in contemplation, and Mr. Johnson wished to know whether Cowper would undertake the editorship.

Milton was, next to Homer, Cowper's chief idol, so in a sense the task would be congenial. The difficulties, and these were serious ones, did not seem insurmountable. The question, however, was not whether the work was too formidable, but whether 'he was providentially called to it'—and he consulted Samuel Teedon. At first Cowper had regarded Teedon as a good Christian, but at the same time as something of a bore. The schoolmaster was tolerated and pitied. A part of Teedon's religious belief was that he, Teedon, was specially favoured by Providence. There was no hypocrisy in it. He was merely a product of a period of intense religious excitement, and there were numbers similar to him. Cowper, on the other hand, regarded himself as God's special aversion. In time the belief of the Almighty's favour for Teedon came to be shared by Cowper, in consequence of which, by degrees, strange to say, the refined and gifted poet got to regard the vain and eccentric schoolmaster as a kind of Delphic oracle. Cowper had seen visions and dreamed dreams. Teedon in like manner received, as he took them to be, revelations from God. But, as we have said, Cowper regarded himself as a man whom God abhorred, and Teedon as Heaven's special favourite. Consequently, whenever in doubt, he had recourse to Teedon. He did so in the matter of Milton; and Teedon, after much prayer, obtained from Heaven that it was certainly expedient that the poet should engage in the work.

Cowper's letter to Teedon after receiving this reply will be given presently.

To interpret Cowper's dreams was on Teedon's part presumptuous enough, still he always put on them the brightest possible interpretations; and did every thing in his power to raise the cloud that rested on the poor poet. Side by side with Cowper's letters of this period ought to be read that deeply interesting production Teedon's Diary¹—the original of which is preserved in the Cowper Museum at Olney. It covers a period of eight hundred and ninety-one days, or about two and a-half years, and, according to it, in that period no fewer than two hundred and seventy-seven letters passed between Teedon and Cowper or Mrs. Unwin,² whilst Teedon's visits to Weston Lodge were also numerous. Cowper is always referred to as the Esqr., and Mrs. Unwin as Madm. Teedon's school, as we have seen, was the Shiel Hall on the Market Place; he lived in a thatched cottage between Dagnell Street (Weston Rd.) and the Market Place. His household consisted of his cousin Elizabeth Killingworth, familiarly 'Mammy,' Mammy's son Eusebius, the 'Worthy' of the Diary, and Mary Taylor ('Polly'), probably Teedon's daughter, who subsequently married Worthy. Eusebius Killingworth was an amateur bookbinder, and these letters contain a number of references to him and his art. Some person unknown allowed Teedon, through Cowper, £7, 10s. per quarter.

The following is Cowper's letter to Teedon after receiving the reply regarding Milton.

¹ Published for The Cowper Society in 1902.

² Cowper to Teedon 72 letters. All are given in this work.

Mrs. Unwin to Teedon 17 letters.

Teedon to Cowper 126 letters.

Teedon to Mrs. Unwin 62 letters.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Weston Underwood.

MR. COWPER desires Mrs. Unwin to acquaint Mr. Teedon, that his anxiety did not arise from any difficulties he apprehended in the performance of his work; but his uncertainty whether he was providentially called to it or not. He is now clearly persuaded by Mr. Teedon's experiences and gracious notices that he is called to it, and is therefore perfectly easy. Mr. Cowper and Mrs. Unwin thank Mr. Teedon for the interesting part he takes in this affair, and hope the Lord will continue to enable him not only to persevere, but also to feel a blessing in it, to his own self spiritually and personally. Mr. Cowper begs Mr. Teedon will be very earnest in prayer, that the possession of peace he now enjoys may be continued to him.

TO JOSEPH JOHNSON, BOOKSELLER

Weston Underwood, Sept. 11, 1791.

DEAR SIR,—I have made some alterations in the printed proposals—I should rather say in the wording of them, the reasons of which I need not mention; those for the most material will suggest themselves.

I am very well satisfied with your terms, and shall be glad if the labourer prove worthy of his hire.

I am obliged to you also for liberty given me to draw on you at my pleasure. But my purpose being to leave the bond-money inviolate till time of payment shall arrive, I mean to trouble you at present only with a draft for fifty pounds payable a fortnight after date, which the arrears you mention will make good, whenever paid; that they will be paid is

certain, though the time when, is not so. When the whole is received there will be a small surplus in your hands, which I will beg you to remit to me without further demand.

I give you a discharge for Mr. Walter Bagot's twenty pounds subscription. Lady Walsingham¹ stands in the list as a simple subscriber, which is a mistake : she sent five guineas.

What do you apprehend will be the effect of Boydell's opposition ?—I am, dear Sir, yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

The Lodge, Sept. 14, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Whoever reviews me will in fact have a laborious task of it, in the performance of which he ought to move leisurely, and to exercise much critical discernment. In the mean time my courage is kept up by the arrival of such testimonies in my favour, as give me the greatest pleasure ; coming from quarters the most respectable. I have reason, therefore, to hope that our periodical judges will not be very adverse to me, and that perhaps they may even favour me. If one man of taste and letters is pleased, another man so qualified can hardly be displeased ; and critics of a different description grumble, they will not, however, materially hurt me.

You, who know how necessary it is to me to be employed, will be glad to hear that I have been called to a new literary engagement, and that I have not refused it. A Milton that is to rival, and if possible to exceed in splendour

¹ Wife of Cowper's old friend Mr. De Grey, created Lord Walsingham.

Boydell's Shakespeare, is in contemplation, and I am in the editor's office. Fuseli is the painter. My business will be to select notes from others, and to write original notes; to translate the Latin and Italian poems, and to give a correct text. I shall have years allowed me to do it in. W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

Weston, Sept. 21, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Of all the testimonies in favour of my Homer that I have received, none has given me so sincere a pleasure as that of Lord Bagot. It is an unmixed pleasure and without a drawback; because I know him to be perfectly, and in all respects, whether erudition or a fine taste be in question, so well qualified to judge me, that I can neither expect nor wish a sentence more valuable than his—

. . . εἰσόκ' ἀντμή

'Εν στήθεσσι μένει, καὶ μοι φίλα γούνατ' ὄρώρει.

I hope by this time you have received your volumes, and are prepared to second the applauses of your brother,—else woe be to you! I wrote to Johnson immediately on the receipt of your last, giving him a strict injunction to despatch them to you without delay. He had sold some time since a hundred of the unsubscribed-for copies.

I have not a history in the world except Baker's *Chronicle*, and that I borrowed three years ago from Mr. Throckmorton. Now the case is this: I am translating Milton's third Elegy—his Elegy on the death of the Bishop of Winchester. He begins it with saying, that while he was sitting alone, dejected, and musing on many melancholy

themes,—first, the idea of the plague presented itself to his mind, and of the havoc made by it among the great. Then he proceeds thus:

*Tum memini clarique ducis, fratrisque verendi
Intempestivis ossa cremata regis :
Et memini Herorum, quos vidit ad aethera raptos,
Flevit et amicos Belgia tota duces.*

I cannot learn from my only oracle, Baker, who this famous leader and his reverend brother were. Neither does he at all ascertain for me the event alluded to in the second of these couplets. I am not yet possessed of Warton, who probably explains it, nor can be for a month to come. Consult him for me if you have him, or if you have him not consult some other;—or you may find the intelligence perhaps in your own budget; no matter how you come by it, only send it to me if you can, and as soon as you can, for I hate to leave unsolved difficulties behind me. In the first year of Charles the First, Milton was seventeen years of age, and then wrote this Elegy. The period, therefore, to which I would refer you, is the two or three last years of James the First.—Ever yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN KING¹

Weston Underwood, Sept. 23, 1791

DEAR SIR,—We are truly concerned at your account of Mrs. King's severe indisposition, and, though you had no better news to tell us, we are

¹ The Rev. John King was eldest son of John King the editor of *Euripides*. He was born about 1724, instituted to the rectory of Pertenhall (Bedfordshire) in 1752. In 1800 he resigned the benefice, but continued to reside in the rectory with his cousin and successor in the living, the Rev. Professor Martyn. He died in 1812.

much obliged to you for writing to inform us of it, and to Mrs. King for desiring you to do it. We take a lively interest in what concerns her. I should never have ascribed her silence to neglect had she neither written to me herself nor commissioned you to write for her. I had indeed for some time expected a letter from her by every post, but accounted for my continual disappointment by supposing her at Edgeware, to which place she intended a visit, as she told me long since, and hoped that she would write immediately on her return.

Her sufferings will be felt here till we learn that they are removed, for which reason we shall be much obliged by the earliest notice of her recovery, which we most sincerely wish, if it please God, and which will not fail to be a constant subject of prayer at Weston.

I beg you, sir, to present Mrs. Unwin's and my affectionate remembrances to Mrs. King, in which you are equally a partaker, and to believe me, with true esteem and much sincerity, yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON

The Lodge, Oct. 4, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am truly sorry for our disappointment (yours I will say as well as ours), and for the cause of it. I had made myself sure of seeing you, and rose this morning full of that pleasant expectation, and promising myself an interview with you in few hours [*sic*]. But your excuse is too just for me to be able, how-

ever I may regret it, to allege one word against the reasonableness of it. The next pleasure, I hope, for which I shall be indebted to you now, will be the earliest intelligence you can send us of Mrs. Rose's amended health, and the next to that, the sight of you at Weston once more, which after having missed you here so long will be doubly gratifying.

The Diary of Samuel Teedon, schoolmaster of Olney, opens on October 17, 1791. Its last entry is February 2, 1794. During this period Teedon saw, wrote to, or heard from Cowper almost every day. On December 1, 1791, Teedon writes: 'I went and received six guineas from madam' (Mrs. Unwin) 'who kindly informed me that Mr. C. and she would settle £20 upon me yearly during their life and my life.'

TO MRS. KING

Weston Underwood, Oct. 21, 1791.

MY DEAR MADAM,—You could not have sent me more agreeable news than that of your better health, and I am greatly obliged to you for making me the first of your correspondents to whom you have given that welcome intelligence. This is a favour which I should have acknowledged much sooner, had not a disorder in my eyes, to which I have always been extremely subject, required that I should make as little use of my pen as possible. I felt much for you, when I read that part of your letter in which you mention your visitors, and the fatigue which, indisposed as you have been, they could not fail to occasion you.

Agreeable as you would have found them at another time, and happy as you would have been in their company, you could not but feel the addition they necessarily made to your domestic attentions as a considerable inconvenience. But I have always said, and shall never say otherwise, that if patience under adversity, and submission to the afflicting hand of God, be true fortitude,—which no reasonable person can deny,—then your sex have ten times more true fortitude to boast than ours; and I have not the least doubt that you carried yourself with infinitely more equanimity on that occasion than I should have done, or any he of my acquaintance. Why is it, since the first offender on earth was a woman, that the women are nevertheless, in all the most important points, superior to the men? That they are so, I will not allow to be disputed, having observed it ever since I was capable of making the observation. I believe, on recollection, that when I had the happiness to see you here, we agitated this question a little; but I do not remember that we arrived at any decision of it. The Scripture calls you the *weaker vessels*; and perhaps the best solution of the difficulty, therefore, may be found in those other words of Scripture, — *My strength is perfected in weakness.* Unless you can furnish me with a better key than this, I shall be much inclined to believe that I have found the true one.

I am deep in a new literary engagement, being retained by my bookseller as editor of an intended most magnificent publication of Milton's *Poetical Works.* This will occupy me as much as Homer did for a year or two to come; and when I have

finished it, I shall have run through all the degrees of my profession, as author, translator, and editor. I know not that a fourth could be found; but if a fourth can be found, I dare say I shall find it.

Mrs. Unwin joins me in best compliments to yourself and Mr. King, who I hope by this time has entirely recovered from the cold he had when you wrote, and from all the effects of it. I shall be happy to learn from you that you have had no more attacks of your most painful disorder in the stomach, and remain in the mean time, my dear madam, your affectionate friend and humble servant,

WM. COWPER.

TO CLOTWORTHY ROWLEY

Weston Underwood, Oct. 22, 1791.

MY DEAR ROWLEY,—How often am I to be mortified by hearing that you have been within sixty miles of me, and have taken your flight again to an immeasurable distance? Will you never in one of these excursions to England (three of which at least you have made since we have had intercourse by letter,)—will you never find your way to Weston? Consider that we are neither of us immortal, and that if we do not contrive to meet before we are fifty years older, our meeting in this world at least will be an affair altogether hopeless; for by that time your travelling days will be over, as mine have been these many years.

I often think of Carr,¹ and shall always think of him with affection. Should I never see him more, I shall never, I trust, be capable of forgetting his

¹ Fellow Templar of Cowper's.

indefatigable attention to me during the last year I spent in London. Two years after I invited him to Huntingdon, where I lived at that time, but he pleaded some engagement, and I have neither seen him nor heard of him, except from yourself, from that hour to the present. I know by experience with what reluctance we move when we have been long fixed; but could he prevail on himself to move hither he would make me very happy; and when you write to him next you may tell him so.

I have to tell you in answer to your question, what I am doing,—that I am preparing to appear in a new character, not as an author, but as an editor;—editor of Milton's *Poetical Works*, which are about to be published in a more splendid style than ever yet. My part of the business is to translate the Latin and Italian pieces, to settle the text, to select notes from others, and to write notes of my own. At present the translation employs me; when that shall be finished, I must begin to read all the books that I can scrape together, of which either Milton or his works are the subject; and that done shall proceed to my commentary. Few people have studied Milton more, or are more familiar with his poetry, than myself; but I never looked into him yet with the eyes of an annotator: therefore whether I may expect much or little difficulty, I know no more than you do, but I shall be occupied in the business, no doubt, these two years. Fuseli is to be the painter, and will furnish thirty capital pictures to the engraver.

I have little poems in plenty, but nothing that I can send to Ireland, unless you could put me into a way of conveying them thither at free cost, for

should you be obliged to pay for them, *le jeu ne vaudra pas les chandelles.*

I rejoice that your family are all well, and in every thing that conduces to your happiness. Adieu, my good, old, and valued friend; permit me to thank you once more for your kind services in the matter of my subscription.—And believe me most truly yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

Weston, Oct. 25, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Your unexpected and transient visit, like every thing else that is past, has now the appearance of a dream; but it was a pleasant one, and I heartily wish that such dreams could recur more frequently. Your brother Chester repeated his visit yesterday, and I never saw him in better spirits. At such times he has, now and then, the very look that he had when he was a boy; and when I see it, I seem to be a boy myself, and entirely forget for a short moment the years that have intervened since I was one. The look that I mean is one that you, I dare say, have observed.—Then we are at Westminster again. He left with me that poem of your brother Lord Bagot's, which was mentioned when you were here. It was a treat to me, and I read it to my cousin Lady Hesketh and to Mrs. Unwin, to whom it was a treat also. It has great sweetness of numbers, and much elegance of expression, and is just such a poem as I should be happy to have composed myself about a year ago, when I was loudly called upon

by a certain nobleman to celebrate the beauties of his villa. But I had two insurmountable difficulties to contend with. One was, that I had never seen his villa; and the other, that I had no eyes at that time for any thing but Homer. Should I at any time hereafter undertake the task, I shall now at least know how to go about it, which, till I had seen Lord Bagot's poem, I verily did not. I was particularly charmed with the parody of those beautiful lines of Milton—

‘The song was partial, but the harmony—
(What could it less, when spirits immortal sing !)
Suspended Hell, and took with ravishment
The thronging audience.’

There's a parenthesis for you ! The parenthesis it seems is out of fashion, and perhaps the moderns are in the right to proscribe what they cannot attain to. I will answer for it that, had we the art at this day of insinuating a sentiment in this graceful manner, no reader of taste would quarrel with the practice. Lord Bagot showed his by selecting the passage for his imitation.

I would beat Warton if he were living, for supposing that Milton ever repented of his compliment to the memory of Bishop Andrews. I neither do, nor can, nor will believe it. Milton's mind could not be narrowed by any thing; and though he quarrelled with episcopacy in the Church of England idea of it, I am persuaded that a good bishop, as well as any other good man, of whatsoever rank or order, had always a share of his veneration.— Yours, my dear friend, very affectionately,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Weston Underwood, October 30, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I rejoice that your fears on Mrs. Rose's account are quieted for the present, and sincerely wish that all fears, and all occasions of fear that are yet in prospect, may be dispersed in the same manner.

If to have partners of our grief be a source of consolation, as it is generally allowed to be, then your concern at being withheld from your intended visit to Weston may be alleviated, for I can assure you truly that the disappointment was not all your own.

The autumn has been a pleasant season at the Hall, and for the pleasure of it we have been much indebted for your profession. The same Triumvirate that enlivened us last year, have contributed as much to our entertainment this year also. You will guess that I mean Mr. Cruisé, Mr. Pitcairn, and William Throckmorton. Could a fourth have been added, you may guess what fourth I mean. I know not that there would have been a wish amongst us for yet another.

You have seen perhaps the beginning of a review of my Homer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for last month. Can you tell me, or can you guess who is the author of it? He says so many handsome things of me that at times I suspect it to be the work of Nichols himself, but then he seems so much disposed to find fault, that at other times I give it to I know not whom. I ask out of mere curiosity. In the mean time I have received and heard of so

many testimonies in my favour given by some of the best judges, that I feel myself armed with at least a sevenfold shield against all censure that I can have to expect from others.

I hope, as you hope for me, that I shall find my Miltonic studies agreeable. At present I occupy myself in the translation of his Latin poems and have just finished his seven elegies. The versification of them is, I think, equal to the best of Ovid, but the matter of them is almost too puerile for me, who, if I wore any beard at all, should now wear a grey one, for which reason I am glad that I have done with them.

I thank you for your kind offer of books, but Johnson, I imagine, will sometime or other furnish me with all the needful. I have given him a charge to do so.

Lady Hesketh, who is with us, joins Mrs. Unwin and myself in best comps. You will not, I hope, let slip the first opportunity you can find to make us amends for your long absence.—I am, my dear friend, most truly yours,

W.M. COWPER.

When you see William Throckn. next, you will see him in mourning for his mother, who died very lately in Wales.

TO JOHN JOHNSON

Weston, Oct. 31, 1791.

MY DEAR JOHNNY,—Your kind and affectionate letter well deserves my thanks, and should have had them sooner, had I not been obliged lately to give

my attention to a mountain of unanswered letters, which I have just now reduced to a molehill; yours lay at the bottom, and I have at last worked my way down to it.

It gives me great pleasure that you have found a house to your minds. May you all three be happier in it than the happiest that ever occupied it before you! But my chief delight of all is to learn that you and Kitty are so completely cured of your long and threatening maladies. I always thought highly of Dr. Kerr, but his extraordinary success in your two instances has even inspired me with an affection for him.

My eyes are much better than when I wrote last, though seldom perfectly well many days together. At this season of the year I catch perpetual colds, and shall continue to do so, till I have got the better of that tenderness of habit with which the summer never fails to affect me.

I am glad that you have heard well of my work in your country. Sufficient proofs have reached me from various quarters, that I have not ploughed the field of Troy in vain.

Were you here I would gratify you with an enumeration of particulars; but since you are not, it must content you to be told, that I have every reason to be satisfied.

Mrs. Unwin, I think, in her letter to cousin Balls, made mention of my new engagement. I have just entered on it, and therefore can at present say little about it.

It is a very creditable one in itself; and may I but acquit myself of it with sufficiency, it will do me honour. The commentator's part, however, is

a new one to me, and one that I little thought to appear in.

Remember your promise, that I shall see you in the spring.

The Hall has been full of company ever since you went, and at present my Catharina¹ is there singing and playing like an angel. W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL

Nov. 14, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have waited and wished for your opinion with the feelings that belong to the value I have for it, and am very happy to find it so favourable. In my table-drawer I treasure up a bundle of suffrages, sent me by those of whose approbation I was most ambitious, and shall presently insert yours among them.

I know not why we should quarrel with compound epithets; it is certain at least they are as agreeable to the genius of our language as to that of the Greek, which is sufficiently proved by their being admitted into our common and colloquial dialect. Black-eyed, nut-brown, crook-shanked, hump-backed, are all compound epithets, and, together with a thousand other such, are used continually, even by those who profess a dislike to such combinations in poetry. Why then do they treat with so much familiarity a thing that they say disgusts them? I doubt if they could give this question a reasonable answer; unless they

¹ Miss Stapleton. See the two poems entitled *Catharina*, Globe Ed., pp. 315 and 386. She became the wife of George Courtenay (George Throckmorton, who had changed his name to Courtenay).

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should answer it by confessing themselves unreasonable.

I have made a considerable progress in the translation of Milton's Latin poems. I give them, as opportunity offers, all the variety of measure that I can. Some I render in heroic rhyme, some in stanzas, some in seven, and some in eight syllable measure, and some in blank verse. They will all together, I hope, make an agreeable miscellany for the English reader. They are certainly good in themselves, and cannot fail to please, but by the fault of their translator.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

Nov. 16, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am weary of making you wait for an answer, and therefore resolve to send you one, though without the lines you ask for. Such as they are, they have been long ready; and could I have found a conveyance for them, should have been with you weeks ago. Mr. Bean's last journey to town might have afforded me an opportunity to send them; but he gave me not sufficient notice. They must, therefore, be still delayed, till either he shall go to London again, or somebody else shall offer. I thank you for yours, which are as much better than mine, as gold is better than feathers.

It seemed necessary that I should account for my apparent tardiness to comply with the obliging request of a lady, and of a lady who employed you as her intermedium. None was wanted, as you well assured her. But had there been occasion for one, she could not possibly have found a better.

I was much pleased with your account of your visit to Cowslip Green;¹ both for the sake of what you saw there, and because I am sure you must have been as happy in such company, as any situation in this world can make you. Miss More has been always employed, since I first heard of her doings, as becomes a Christian. So she was, while endeavouring to reform the unreformable Great; and so she is, while framing means and opportunities to instruct the more tractable Little. Horace's *Virginibus, puerisque*, may be her motto; but in a sense much nobler than he has annexed to it. I cannot, however, be entirely reconciled to the thought of her being henceforth silent, though even for the sake of her present labours. A pen useful as hers ought not, perhaps, to be laid aside: neither, perhaps, will she altogether renounce it, but when she has established her schools, and habituated them to the discipline she intends, will find it desirable to resume it.—I rejoice that she has a sister like herself, capable of bidding defiance to fatigue and hardship, to dirty roads and wet raiment, in so excellent a cause.

I beg that when you write next to either of those ladies, you will present my best compliments to Miss Martha,² and tell her that I can never feel myself flattered more than I was by her application. God knows how unworthy I judge myself, at the same time, to be admitted into a collection of which you are a member. Were there not a

¹ Hannah More's home, near Bristol.

² Hannah More's sister. Cowper had been asked to write something for insertion 'in a collection of handwritings and signatures' made by 'Miss Patty More.' For his contribution see letters of 20th February 1792 and 4th March 1792.

crowned head or two to keep me in countenance, I should even blush to think of it.

I would that I could see some of the mountains which you have seen; especially, because Dr. Johnson has pronounced that no man is qualified to be a poet who has never seen a mountain.¹ But mountains I shall never see, unless, perhaps, in a dream, or unless there are such in heaven. Nor those, unless I receive twice as much mercy as ever yet was shown to any man.

I am now deep in Milton, translating his Latin poems for a pompous edition, of which you have undoubtedly heard. This amuses me for the present, and will for a year or two. So long, I presume, I shall be occupied in the several functions that belong to my present engagement.

Mrs. Unwin and I are about as well as usual; always mindful of you, and always affectionately so. Our united love attends yourself and Miss Catlett.—Believe me most truly yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

Weston Underwood, Dec. 5, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Your last brought me two cordials; for what can better deserve that name than the cordial approbation of two such readers as your brother, the bishop, and your good friend and neighbour, the clergyman? The former I have

¹ Regions mountainous and wild, thinly inhabited and little cultivated, make a great part of the earth, and he that has never seen them must live unacquainted with much of the face of nature, and with one of the great scenes of human existence.—Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*.

ever esteemed and honoured with the justest cause, and am as ready to honour and esteem the latter as you can wish me to be, and as his virtues and talents deserve. Do I hate a parson? Heaven forbid! I love you all when you are good for any thing; and as to the rest, I would mend them if I could, and that is the worst of my intentions towards them.

I heard above a month since, that this first edition of my work was at that time nearly sold. It will not therefore, I presume, be long before I must go to press again. This I mention merely from an earnest desire to avail myself of all other strictures that either your good neighbour, Lord Bagot, the bishop, or yourself,

πάντων ἐκπαγλότατ' ἀνδρῶν,

may happen to have made, and will be so good as to favour me with. Those of the good Evander contained in your last have served me well, and I have already, in the three different places referred to, accommodated the text to them. And this I have done in one instance even a little against the bias of my own opinion.

. . . ἔγώ δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἔλωμαι
Ἐλθὼν σὺν πλεόνεσσι

The sense I had given of these words is the sense in which an old scholiast has understood them, as appears in Clarke's note *in loco*. Clarke indeed prefers the other, but it does not appear plain to me that he does it with good reason against the judgment of a very ancient commentator, and a Grecian. And I am the rather inclined to this persuasion, because Achilles himself seems to have

apprehended that Agamemnon would not content himself with Briseïs only, when he says,

But I have OTHER precious things on board,
Of THESE take NONE away without my leave, etc.

It is certain that the words are ambiguous, and that the sense of them depends altogether on the punctuation. But I am always under the correction of so able a critic as your neighbour, and have altered, as I say, my version, accordingly.

As to Milton, the die is cast. I am engaged, have bargained with Johnson, and cannot recede. I should otherwise have been glad to do as you advise, to make the translation of his Latin and Italian, part of another volume; for, with such an addition, I have nearly as much verse in my budget as would be required for the purpose. This squabble, in the mean time between Fuseli and Boydell,¹ does not interest me at all; let it terminate as it may, I have only to perform my job, and leave the event to be decided by the combatants.

*Suave, mari magno turbantibus æquaora ventis
E terrâ magnum allerius spectare laborem.*

Adieu, my dear friend, I am most sincerely yours,
W. C.

Why should you suppose that I did not admire the poem you showed me? I did admire it, and told you so, but you carried it off in your pocket, and so doing left me to forget it, and without the means of inquiry.

¹ A quarrel about the paintings in the Shaksperian Gallery in Pall Mall.

I am thus nimble in answering, merely with a view to ensure myself the receipt of other remarks in time for a new impression.

TO THE REV. JAMES HURDIS

Weston, Dec. 10, 1791.

DEAR SIR,—I am much obliged to you for wishing that I were employed in some original work rather than in translation. To tell you the truth, I am of your mind ; and unless I could find another Homer, I shall promise (I believe) and vow, when I have done with Milton, never to translate again. But my veneration for our great countryman is equal to what I feel for the Grecian ; and consequently I am happy, and feel myself honourably employed whatever I do for Milton. I am now translating his *Epitaphium Damonis*, a pastoral in my judgment equal to any of Virgil's *Bucolics*, but of which Dr. Johnson (so it pleased him) speaks, as I remember, contemptuously. But he who never saw any beauty in a rural scene was not likely to have much taste for a pastoral. *In pace quiescat !*

I was charmed with your friendly offer to be my advocate with the public ; should I want one, I know not where I could find a better. The reviewer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* grows more and more civil. Should he continue to sweeten at this rate, as he proceeds, I know not what will become of all the little modesty I have left. I have availed myself of some of his strictures, for I wish to learn from every body.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Weston, Dec. 21, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—It grieves me, after having indulged a little hope that I might perhaps have the pleasure to see you in the holidays, to be obliged to disappoint myself. The occasion too is such as will ensure me your sympathy.

On Saturday last,¹ while I was at my desk near the window, and Mrs. Unwin at the fireside, opposite to it, I heard her suddenly exclaim, ‘Oh ! Mr. Cowper, don’t let me fall !’ I turned and saw her actually falling, together with her chair, and started to her side just in time to prevent her. She was seized with a violent giddiness, which lasted, though with some abatement, the whole day, and was attended too with some other most alarming symptoms. At present however she is relieved from the vertigo, and seems in all respects better, except that she is so enfeebled as to be unable to quit her bed for more than an hour in a day.

She has been my faithful and affectionate nurse for many years, and consequently has a claim on all my attentions. She has them, and will have them as long as she wants them ; which will probably be, at the best, a considerable time to come.

I feel the shock, as you may suppose, in every nerve. God grant that there may be no repetition of it. Another such a stroke upon her would, I think, overset me completely ; but at present I hold up bravely.

¹ ‘December 17.—Mr. Higgins told us, in the eve, Mrs. Unwin was taken ill in the morn with a dizziness.

‘December 18.—I went over this morn. As soon as I went I was had up to see her, and prayed.’—*Teedon’s Diary*.

Lady Hesketh is also far from well. She has ventured these two last days to dine in the study, else she has kept her chamber above this fortnight. She has suffered, however, by this first sally, and has taken cold, as I feared she would.

Thus are we a house of invalids, and must wait for the pleasure of receiving you here till it shall please God to restore us to health again.—With my best compts. to Mrs. Rose, and with those of the two ladies, I remain, my dear friend, most sincerely yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

21 Dec. 1791.

DEAR SIR,—I sent you a verbal message this morning, being at breakfast when the messenger set off. I have now just leisure to say, that, except a night almost sleepless, Mrs. Unwin seems amended in her health, but is still very feeble. Her giddiness and sickness seem removed, and her pains, of which she had many, are all much abated.

You will give thanks to God for us, and pray for further mercies. I have been much agitated in my spirits, but am as well on the whole as I could expect to be.

I was writing this when yours arrived. Should have written yesterday, but had no opportunity.—I thank you, am much obliged to you for all your truly Christian services, and remain, your

W.M. COWPER.¹

¹ "December 21.—Mr. Cowper answered in the kindest manner the letter I writ yesterday and sent to-day, and had the happiness to find Madm. much better and come down."—*Teedon's Diary*.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

Weston, Jan. 1, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—What you call a note I call a letter, and a very kind one, and as such entitled to my grateful acknowledgments. You must receive a note *indeed* in return, for more I shall not be able to afford you at present, but I write to relieve you from a part at least of your friendly anxiety on our account.

Mrs. Unwin is better, and I hope gathers strength daily. She rises not much later than her usual hour, and sits up till about eight in the evening, but does not yet leave her chamber.

You have learned, I suppose, from Mr. Bean the manner in which this illness seized her. Nothing could be more sudden or alarming. She would have fallen to the floor, if I had not sprang to her help, for while I was writing at the other side of the room, she called to me to save her from falling. She seemed to have lost for a few moments all use of her limbs from the waist downward, for it was with the utmost difficulty that I replaced her in her seat, having caught her in the moment when she was sliding from it. It was a violent vertigo that seized her brain, and disturbed her sight so much that for a day or two she saw objects inverted.

I thank God—no symptoms of the paralytic kind remain. Her senses were never affected, but her speech acquired a rapidity which would not allow it to be perfectly distinct. She has however now nearly regained her usual utterance, and will, I hope, soon resume her place in the study, and all her former functions in the family.

It was a fortnight yesterday since she was taken with this illness. You would not have received your first notice of it from Mr. Bean, had I not during the first week found myself incapable of writing, and abstained from it during the second with a design of communicating to you the news of her indisposition and of her recovery both together.

Cætera desunt.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

1 Jan. 1792.

MY spirits were much and dreadfully affected for about a week, but the sight of Mrs. Unwin's daily recovery has been my effective restorative, so that at present I am as cheerful as I generally am, especially at this season of the year, the most unfavourable of all to persons disposed to melancholy.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

6 Jan. 1792.¹

TO MRS. KING

Weston Underwood, Jan. 26, 1792.

MY DEAR MADAM,—Silent as I have long been, I have had but too good a reason for being so. About six weeks since, Mrs. Unwin was seized with a sudden and alarming disorder, a vertigo, which would have thrown her out of her chair to the ground, had I not been quick enough to catch her

¹ [There is in existence a letter of this date to Rose, although the editor has not had an opportunity of transcribing it. It mentions Romney the painter, also that Mrs. Unwin continues to recover strength —'the principal means of her recovery has been the daily use of the electrical machine.']

while she was falling. For some moments her knees and ankles were so entirely disabled, that she had no use of them; and it was with the exertion of all my strength that I replaced her in her seat. Many days she kept her bed, and for some weeks her chamber; but, at length, has joined me again in the study. Her recovery has been extremely slow, and she is still feeble; but, I thank God, not so feeble but that I hope for her perfect restoration as the spring advances. I am persuaded that, with your feelings for your friends, you will know how to imagine what I must have suffered on an occasion so distressing, and to pardon a silence owing to such a cause.

The account you give me of the patience with which a lady of your acquaintance has lately endured the terrible operation of having her breast laid open, is a strong proof that your sex surpasses ours in heroic fortitude. I call it by that name, because I verily believe that, in God's account, there is more true heroism in suffering His will with meek submission, than in doing our own, or that of our fellow-mortals who may have a right to command us, with the utmost valour that was ever exhibited in a field of battle. Renown and glory are, in general, the incitements to such exertions; but no laurels are to be won by sitting patiently under the knife of a surgeon. The virtue is, therefore, of a less suspicious character; the principle of it more simple, and the practice more difficult:—considerations that seem sufficiently to warrant my opinion, that the infallible Judge of human conduct may possibly behold with more complacency a suffering than an active courage.

I forgot if I told you that I am engaged for a new edition of Milton's Poems. In fact, I have still other engagements, and so various, that I hardly know to which of them all to give my first attentions. I have only time, therefore, to condole with you on the double loss you have lately sustained, and to congratulate you on being female; because, as such, you will, I trust, acquit yourself well under so severe a trial.

Mrs. Unwin's affectionate respects united with mine attend yourself and Mr. King, and I remain, my dear Madam, most sincerely yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Friday, 10 Feb. 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I write merely that you may not think yourself neglected, for I have nothing very pleasant to communicate. I hope indeed that Mrs. Unwin continues to recover strength, but her sleep is sadly hindered by a tormenting pain in her face.

Your constant solicitude and prayers for me make it necessary that I should inform you how I fare myself, otherwise I think it a subject not worth mentioning. My experience is such as it is very difficult to reconcile with the promises imparted to you on my behalf. My days are spent without one symptom of spiritual life, and my nights not seldom under a constant sense of God's contempt and abhorrence. Such was the last night. You will say it was an enemy that did this. I answer, true; but you and I differ about the person. You suppose

him to be Satan, and I suppose him to be Satan's master. Who shall decide between us?—Yours,

W.M. COWPER.¹

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

Weston Underwood, Feb. 14, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—It is the only advantage I believe that they who love each other derive from living at a distance, that the news of such ills as may happen to either seldom reaches the other till the cause of complaint is over. Had I been your next neighbour I should have suffered with you during the whole indisposition of your two children, and your own. As it is, I have nothing to do but to rejoice in your own recovery and theirs, which I do sincerely, and wish only to learn from yourself that it is complete.

I thank you for suggesting the omission of the line due to the helmet of Achilles. How the omission happened I know not, whether by my fault or the printer's; it is certain, however, that I had translated it, and I have now given it its proper place.

I purpose to keep back a second edition, till I have had an opportunity to avail myself of the remarks both of friends and strangers. The ordeal of criticism still awaits me in the reviews, and probably they will all in their turn mark many things that may be mended. By the *Gentleman's Magazine* I have already profited in several instances. My reviewer there, though favourable in the main,

¹ ‘10 February, 1792.—I received this day a most mournful letter from the Esqr. declaring his firm belief that God was his enemy and not Satan. I was overwhelmed with grief and sorrow.’—*Teedon's Diary*.

is a pretty close observer, and though not always right, is often so.

In the affair of Milton I will have no *horrida bella*, if I can help it. It is at least my present purpose to avoid them if possible. For which reason, unless I should soon see occasion to alter my plan, I shall confine myself merely to the business of an annotator, which is my proper province, and shall sift out of Warton's notes every tittle that relates to the private character, political or religious principles of my author. These are properly subjects for a biographer's handling, but by no means, as it seems to me, for a commentator's.

In answer to your question if I have had a correspondence with the Chancellor—I reply—Yes. We exchanged three or four letters on the subject of Homer, or rather on the subject of my Preface. He was doubtful whether or not my preference of blank verse, as affording opportunity for a closer version, was well founded. On this subject he wished to be convinced; defended rhyme with much learning, and much shrewd reasoning, but at last allowed me the honour of the victory, expressing himself in these words:—*I am clearly convinced that Homer may be best rendered in blank verse, and you have succeeded in the passages that I have looked into.*

Thus it is when a wise man differs in opinion. Such a man will be candid; and conviction, not triumph, will be his object.

Adieu!—The hard name I gave you I take to myself, and am your

ἐκπαγλότατος,

W. C.

In February 1792 commenced Cowper's acquaintance with Mr. Thomas Park. Mr. Park sent Cowper a kind letter and a parcel containing *Cursory Remarks* and Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdesse*. In reply came the following:—

TO THOMAS PARK¹

Weston Underwood, Feb. 19, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—Yesterday evening your parcel came safe to hand, containing the *Cursory Remarks*, Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdesse*, and your kind letter, for all which I am much obliged to you.

Every thing that relates to Milton must be welcome to an editor of him; and I am so unconnected with the learned world that, unless assistance seeks me, I am not very likely to find it. Fletcher's work was not in my possession; nor, indeed, was I possessed of any other, when I engaged in this undertaking, that could serve me much in the performance of it. The various untoward incidents of a very singular life have deprived me of a valuable collection, partly inherited from my father, partly from my brother, and partly made by myself; so that I have at present fewer books than any man ought to have who writes for the public, especially who assumes the character of an editor. At the present moment, however, I find myself tolerably well provided for this occasion by the kindness of a

¹ Thomas Park (1759-1834) was a very famous antiquary and bibliographer in his day. He had been originally brought up as an engraver, but in 1797 he gave himself up entirely to the study of antiquities. Cowper encouraged him to print his poems, and Anna Seward helped him to correct his compositions. He published several volumes of very minor poetry, but his greater service to literature was in his editions of various authors.

few friends, who have not been backward to pick from their shelves every thing that they thought might be useful to me. I am happy to be able to number you among these friendly contributors.

You will add a considerable obligation to those you have already conferred, if you will be so good as to furnish me with such notices of your own as you offer. Parallel passages, or, at least, a striking similarity of expression, is always worthy of remark; and I shall reprint, I believe, all Mr. Warton's notes of that kind, except such as are rather trivial, and some, perhaps, that are a little whimsical, and except that I shall diminish the number of his references, which are not seldom redundant. Where a word only is in question, and that, perhaps, not an uncommon one in the days of Milton, his use of it proves little or nothing; for it is possible that authors writing on similar subjects may use the same words by mere accident. Borrowing seems to imply poverty, and of poverty I can rather suspect any man than Milton. But I have as yet determined nothing absolutely concerning the mode of my commentary, having hitherto been altogether busied in the translation of his Latin poems. These I have finished, and shall immediately proceed to a version of the Italian. They, being few, will not detain me long; and, when they are done, will leave me at full liberty to deliberate on the main business, and to plan and methodize my operations.

I shall be always happy in, and account myself honoured by, your communications, and hope that our correspondence thus begun will not terminate *in limine primo*.—I am, dear sir, with much respect, your most obliged humble servant,

Wm. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

Feb. 20, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—When I wrote the lines¹ in question, I was, as I almost always am, so pressed for time, that I was obliged to put them down in a great hurry. Perhaps I pointed them wrong. If a full stop be made at the end of the second line, the appearance of inconsistency, perhaps, will vanish: but should you still think them liable to that objection, they may be altered thus:—

In vain to live from age to age
We modern bards endeavour;
But write in Patty's book one page,
You gain your point for ever.

Trifling enough, I readily confess they are; but I have always allowed myself to trifle occasionally; and on this occasion had not, nor have at present, time to do more. By the way, should you think this amended copy worthy to displace the former, I must wait for some future opportunity to send you them properly transcribed for the purpose.

It is rather singular that the same post which brought me yours in which you express your disapprobation of this trifle, as such, brought me likewise a request from a very pious lady that I would write for her a copy of verses on a pen stolen by a niece of hers, from the Prince of Wales's standish. I am obliged to comply, and consequently must trifle again;—and thus it fares with poets by pro-

¹ Lines written for insertion in a collection of Handwritings and Signatures, made by Miss Patty, sister of Hannah More, 6 March 1792. See Globe Ed. p. 384, and letter of 16 November 1791.

fession.¹ Our wits are not at our command, but must of necessity be sometimes directed to such subjects, not as we should choose for ourselves, but as our friends are pleased to choose for us.

Your demand of more original composition from me will, if I live, and it please God to afford me health, in all probability be sooner or later gratified. In the mean time, you need not,—and if you turn the matter in your thoughts a little, you will perceive that you need not,—think me unworthily employed in preparing a new edition of Milton. His two principal poems are of a kind that call for an editor who believes the gospel, and is well grounded in all evangelical doctrine. Such an editor they have never had yet, though only such a one can be qualified for the office.

We mourn for the mismanagement at Botany Bay, and foresee the issue. The Romans were, in their origin, banditti; and if they became in time masters of the world, it was not by drinking grog, and allowing themselves in all sorts of licentiousness. The African colonisation,² and the manner of conducting it, has long been matter to us of pleasing speculation. God has highly honoured Mr. Thornton; and I doubt not that the subsequent history of the two settlements will strikingly evince the superior wisdom of his proceedings.

I write now in a hurry not to be easily conceived, and am this moment called to breakfast. Mrs. Unwin, I thank God, is still recovering, though

¹ The lines begin ‘Sweet nymph, who art, it seems, accused.’ See Letter of 8 March 1792.

² The Sierra Leone colony for liberated slaves. It owed its origin to the efforts of Mr. Henry Thornton and Mr. Zachary Macaulay.

still slowly. She unites with me in affectionate remembrances to yourself and Miss Catlett, and Lady Hesketh adds her compliments. Adieu, my dear friend, I am most truly yours,

W.M. COWPER.

Many thanks for a barrel of oysters, which came, notwithstanding the late warm weather, perfectly sweet and good.

P.S.—Lady Hesketh made the same objection to my verses as you; but she being a lady-critic, I did not heed her. As they stand at present however, they are hers; and I believe you will think them much improved.

My heart bears me witness how glad I shall be to see you at the time you mention; and Mrs. Unwin says the same.

TO THE REV. JAMES HURDIS

Weston, Feb. 21, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,—My obligations to you on the score of your kind and friendly remarks demanded from me a much more expeditious acknowledgment of the numerous packets that contained them; but I have been hindered by many causes, each of which you will admit as a sufficient apology, but none of which I will mention lest I should give too much of my paper to the subject. My acknowledgments are likewise due to your fair sister, who has transcribed so many sheets in so neat a hand, and with so much accuracy.

At present I have no leisure for Homer, but

shall certainly find leisure to examine him with a reference to your strictures, before I send him a second time to the printer. This I am at present unwilling to do, choosing rather to wait, if that may be, till I shall have undergone the discipline of all the reviewers; none of whom have yet taken me in hand, the *Gentleman's Magazine* excepted. By several of his remarks I have benefited, and shall no doubt be benefited by the remarks of all.

Milton at present engrosses me altogether. His Latin pieces I have translated, and have begun with the Italian. These are few, and will not detain me long. I shall then proceed immediately to deliberate upon, and to settle the plan of my Commentary, which I have hitherto had but little time to consider. I look forward to it, for this reason, with some anxiety. I trust at least that this anxiety will cease when I have once satisfied myself about the best manner of conducting it. But after all I seem to fear more the labour to which it calls me, than any great difficulty with which it is likely to be attended. To the labours of versifying I have no objection; but to the labours of criticism I am new, and apprehend that I shall find them wearisome. Should that be the case, I shall be dull, and must be contented to share the censure of being so with almost all the commentators that have ever existed.

I have expected, but not wondered that I have not received, *Sir Thomas More*,¹ and the other mss. you promised me, because my silence has been such, considering how loudly I was called upon to write, that you must have concluded me either dead

¹ Hurd's tragedy.

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or dying, and did not choose perhaps to trust them
to executors. W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Weston, Friday, 24 Feb. 1792.

MRS. UNWIN and Mr. Cowper thank Mr. Teedon
for his last favour. The health of the former seems
still gradually to mend, and Mr. Cowper's experi-
ence has of late seemed to be a shade or two lighter.

TO THE REV. JAMES HURDIS

Weston, March 2, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have this moment finished a
comparison of your remarks with my text, and
feel so sensibly my obligations to your great
accuracy and kindness, that I cannot deny myself
the pleasure of expressing them immediately. I
only wish that instead of revising the two first
books of the *Iliad*, you could have found leisure
to revise the whole two poems, sensible how much
my work would have benefited.

I have not always adopted your lines, though often
perhaps at least as good as my own; because there
will and must be dissimilarity of manner between
two so accustomed to the pen as we are. But I
have let few passages go unamended, which you
seemed to think exceptionable; and this not at all
from complaisance; for in such a case I would not
sacrifice an iota on that principle, but on clear
conviction.

I have as yet heard nothing from Johnson about
the two MSS. you announce, but feel ashamed that

I should want your letter to remind me of your obliging offer to inscribe *Sir Thomas More* to me, should you resolve to publish him. Of my consent to such a measure you need not doubt. I am covetous of respect and honour from all such as you.

Tame hare, at present I have none. But to make amends, I have a beautiful little spaniel, called Beau, to whom I will give the kiss your sister Sally¹ intended for the former, unless she should command me to bestow it elsewhere; it shall attend on her directions.

I am going to take a last dinner with a most agreeable family, who have been my only neighbours ever since I have lived at Weston. On Monday they go to London, and in the summer to an estate in Oxfordshire, which is to be their home in future. The occasion is not at all a pleasant one to me, nor does it leave me spirits to add more than that I am, dear sir, most truly yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

Weston, March 4, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—My patience must indeed have been made of flimsy stuff, had it given way to your reasonable objection. Yours is likely to undergo a severer trial while I pester you again on this trivial subject.

You and I were well content with the new edition of my four lines as corrected and amended by my

¹ This month Cowper wrote the lines entitled *Epitaph on a free but tame Redbreast, a favourite of Miss Sally Hurdie*. Sally Hurdie died in August 1792.

cousin. You even thought that they could not be mended: but she was of a different opinion, and has given a copy of them I think still better. Unless, therefore, you have already sent them, I shall be obliged to you if you will not, till I can remit to you this best edition, which I shall soon be able to do by the aid of my cousin, who goes to town on Wednesday. They are at present thus altered:—

In vain to live from age to age,
While modern bards endeavour,
I write my name in Patty's page,
And gain my point for ever.

The greater propriety of this way of expressing it will present itself to you, and therefore need not be mentioned.

You may dismiss all fears lest I should bestow praise on so unworthy a subject of it as his Royal Highness;¹ there is not a character in Europe that I more abominate. Whatever I may write on that occasion, shall, you may depend on it, do him as little honour and as much justice as the lines you sent me. I have paid here and there a compliment to persons who I knew deserved one, and I would not invalidate them all by proving that my Muse is an indiscriminating harlot, and her good word nothing worth.

All our little world is going to London, the gulf that swallows most of our good things, and, like a bad stomach, too often assimilates them to itself. Our neighbours at the Hall go thither to-morrow. Mr. and Mrs. Throckmorton, as we lately called

¹ The Prince of Wales, afterwards George iv. He was born in 1762, so at this time was about thirty. See Letter of 18 March 1792.

them, but now Sir John¹ and my Lady, are no longer inhabitants here, but henceforth of Bucklands, in Berkshire. I feel the loss of them, and shall feel it, since kinder or more friendly treatment I never can receive at any hands, than I have always found at theirs. But it has long been a foreseen change, and was indeed almost daily expected long before it happened. The desertion of the Hall, however, will not be total. The second brother, George, now Mr. Courtenay, intends to reside there; and with him, as with his elder brother, I have always been on terms the most agreeable.

Such is this variable scene; so variable, that had the reflections I sometimes make upon it a permanent influence, I should tremble at the thought of a new connexion; and, to be out of the reach of its mutability, lead almost the life of a hermit. It is well with those who, like you, have God for their companion. Death cannot deprive them of Him, and He changes not the place of His abode. Other changes, therefore, to them are all supportable; and what you say of your own experience is the strongest possible proof of it. Had you lived without God, you could not have endured the loss you mention. May He preserve me from a similar one; at least, till He shall be pleased to draw me to Himself again! Then, if ever that day come, it will make me equal to any burthen; but at present I can bear nothing well. Adieu. Mrs. Unwin is, I hope, daily regaining strength, and joins me in love to yourself and Betsy. Lady Hesketh sends compliments. I am sincerely yours,

W. C.

¹ Sir Robert Throckmorton, who died in 1791, was succeeded in the title by Mr. John Throckmorton.

TO MRS. KING

Weston, March 8, 1792.

MY DEAR MADAM,—Having just finished all my Miltonic translations, and not yet begun my comments, I find an interval that cannot be better employed than in discharging arrears due to my correspondents, of whom I begin first a letter to you, though your claim be of less ancient standing than those of all the rest.

I am extremely sorry that you have been so much indisposed, and especially that your indisposition has been attended with excessive pain. But may I be permitted to observe, that your going to church on Christmas Day, immediately after such a sharp fit of rheumatism, was not according to the wisdom with which I believe you to be endued, nor was it acting so charitably toward yourself as I am persuaded you would have acted toward another. To another you would, I doubt not, have suggested that text—‘I will have mercy and not sacrifice,’—as implying a gracious dispensation, in circumstances like yours, from the practice of so severe and dangerous a service.

Mrs. Unwin, I thank God, is better; but still wants much of complete restoration. We have reached a time of life when heavy blows, if not fatal, are at least long felt.

I have received many testimonies concerning my Homer, which do me much honour, and afford me great satisfaction; but none from which I derive, or have reason to derive, more than that of Mr. Martyn. It is of great use to me, when I write, to suppose some such person at my elbow, witnessing what I

do ; and I ask myself frequently,—Would this please him ? If I think it would, it stands ; if otherwise, I alter it. My work is thus finished, as it were, under the eye of some of the best judges, and has the better chance to win their approbation when they actually see it.

Almost immediately after the receipt of your last favour, I addressed myself to the subject you did me the honour to recommend to me, and produced the following stanzas. This will show at least the readiness with which my Muse undertakes to fulfil all commands from Pertenhall, which is the reason why I mention it.

ON A LATE THEFT¹

Sweet nymph, who art, it seems, accused
 Of stealing George's pen,
 Use it thyself, and having used,
 E'en give it him again :
 The plume of his, that has one scrap
 Of thy good sense express'd,
 Will be a feather in his cap
 Worth more than all his crest.

Your approbation is all the fame I propose to myself on this occasion ; for I wish to be known only to yourself and Mr. King as the author. Our united best compliments attend you both ; and I am, my dear Madam, affectionately yours, W. C.

TO THOMAS PARK

Weston Underwood, March 10, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—You will have more candour, as I hope and believe, than to impute my delay to answer

¹ Elsewhere entitled *To a Young Lady who stole a pen from the Prince of Wales's Standish.*

your kind and friendly letter to inattention or want of a cordial respect for the writer of it. To suppose any such cause of my silence were injustice both to yourself and me. The truth is, I am a very busy man, and cannot gratify myself with writing to my friends so punctually as I wish.

You have not in the least fallen in my esteem on account of your employment,¹ as you seemed to apprehend that you might. It is an elegant one, and, when you speak modestly, as you do, of your proficiency in it, I am far from giving you entire credit for the whole assertion. I had indeed supposed you a person of independent fortune, who had nothing to do but to gratify himself; and whose mind, being happily addicted to literature, was at full leisure to enjoy its innocent amusement. But it seems I was mistaken, and your time is principally due to an art which has a right pretty much to engross your attention, and which gives rather the air of an intrigue to your intercourse and familiarity with the Muses than a lawful connexion. No matter: I am not prudish in this respect, but honour you the more for a passion, virtuous and laudable in itself; and which you indulge not, I dare say, without benefit both to yourself and your acquaintance. I, for one, am likely to reap the fruit of your amours, and ought, therefore, to be one of the last to quarrel with them.

You are in danger, I perceive, of thinking of me more highly than you ought to think. I am not one of the *literati*, among whom you seem disposed to place me. Far from it. I told you in my last how heinously I am unprovided with the means of being so, having long since sent all my books to

¹ Park was an engraver.

market. My learning accordingly lies in a very narrow compass. It is school-boy learning somewhat improved, and very little more. From the age of twenty to twenty-three, I was occupied, or ought to have been, in the study of the law. From thirty-three to sixty I have spent my time in the country, where my reading has been only an apology for idleness, and where, when I had not either a magazine or a review in my hand, I was sometimes a carpenter, at others a bird-cage maker, or a gardener, or drawer of landscapes. At fifty years of age I commenced an author. It is a whim that has served me longest and best, and which will probably be my last.

Thus you see I have had very little opportunity to become what is properly called—*learned*. In truth, having given myself so entirely of late to poetry, I am not sorry for this deficiency, since great learning, I have been sometimes inclined to suspect, is rather a hindrance to the fancy than a furtherance.

You will do me a favour by sending me a copy of Thomson's monumental inscription. He was a poet for whose memory, as you justly suppose, I have great respect; in common, indeed, with all who ever read him with taste and attention.—Wishing you heartily success in your present literary undertaking,¹ and in all professional ones, I remain, dear sir, with great esteem, sincerely yours,

W.M. COWPER.

P.S.—After what I have said, I will not blush to confess, that I am at present perfectly unacquainted with the merits of Drummond, but shall be happy to see him in due time, as I should be to see any author edited by you.

¹ His edition of the Poems of Drummond of Hawthornden.

TO JOHN JOHNSON

Weston, March 11, 1792.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,—You talk of primroses that you pulled on Candlemas Day; but what think you of me who heard a nightingale on New Year's Day?¹ Perhaps I am the only man in England who can boast of such good fortune; good indeed, for if it was at all an omen it could not be an unfavourable one. The winter, however, is now making himself amends, and seems the more peevish for having been encroached on at so undue a season. Nothing less than a large slice out of the spring will satisfy him.

Lady Hesketh left us yesterday. She intended, indeed, to have left us four days sooner: but in the evening before the day fixed for her departure, snow enough fell to occasion just so much delay of it.

We have faint hopes that in the month of May we shall see her again. I know that you have had a letter from her, and you will no doubt have the grace not to make her wait long for an answer.

We expect Mr. Rose on Tuesday; but he stays with us only till the Saturday following. With him I shall have some conferences on the subject of Homer, respecting a new edition I mean, and some perhaps on the subject of Milton; on him I have not yet begun to comment, or even fix the time when I shall. Forget not your promised visit!

W. C.

Cowper's undertaking the translation of Milton was the means of linking him with William Hayley,

¹ See the lines to the Nightingale, which the author heard sing on New Year's Day, 1792. *Globe Ed.*, p. 383.

an author at that time of considerable repute, but now remembered only as Cowper's first biographer. Whilst the Milton was going forward, it became known that the eminent publisher Boydell had engaged Hayley to write a life for a sumptuous edition of Milton's poems, and the newspapers represented Hayley and Cowper as rivals. Hayley at once wrote a sonnet addressed to Cowper, and enclosed it with a most kindly letter, in which he observed that the two works were so different in character that it was impossible they could clash. This was on February 7. Owing, however, to the negligence of Johnson the publisher, Cowper did not receive it until March 17. Cowper replied in terms not less kindly than Hayley's, but of his letter, apparently only the following paragraph has been preserved.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY¹

17 March, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I rejoice that you are employed to do justice to the character of a man, perhaps the chief of all, who have done honour to our country, and whose very name I reverence. Here we shall not clash, or interfere with each other, for a Life of Milton is no part of my bargain. In short we will cope with each other in nothing, but that affection

¹ William Hayley (1745-1820) was a poet of distinction in his day; was, indeed, among contemporaries constantly compared with the very greatest poet that have ever lived. In 1769 he wrote a tragedy, *The Afflicted Father*. His most notable success was achieved in 1781 by *The Triumph of Temper*, which ran through several editions. His *Life of Milton* was published in 1794, prefixed to an edition of Milton's works. He published his *Life of Cowper* in 1803, and his *Life of Romney* in 1809. Southey once wrote: 'Everything about the man is good except his poetry.'

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which you avow for me, unworthy of it as I am, and which your character and writings, and especially your kind letter, have begotten in my heart for you. Every remark of yours on Milton will be highly valued by me.

W.M. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

March 18, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—We are now once more reduced to our dual state, having lost our neighbours at the Hall, and our inmate Lady Hesketh. Mr. Rose, indeed, has spent two or three days here, and is still with us: but he leaves us in the afternoon. There are those in the world whom we love, and whom we are happy to see; but we are happy likewise in each other, and so far independent of our fellow mortals, as to be able to pass our time comfortably without them,—as comfortably, at least, as Mrs. Unwin's frequent indispositions, and my no less frequent troubles of mind, will permit. When I am much distressed, any company but hers distresses me more, and makes me doubly sensible of my sufferings; though sometimes, I confess, it falls out otherwise; and by the help of more general conversation, I recover that elasticity of mind which is able to resist the pressure. On the whole, I believe, I am situated exactly as I should wish to be, were my situation to be determined on by my own election; and am denied no comfort that is compatible with the total absence of the chief of all.

William Peace called on me, I forget when,—but about a year ago. His errand was to obtain from

me a certificate of his good behaviour during the time he had lived with us. His conduct in our service had been such, for sobriety and integrity, as entitled him to it; and I readily gave him one. At the same time, I confess myself not at all surprised that the family to which you recommended him soon grew weary of him. He had a bad temper that always sat astride on a runaway tongue, and ceased not to spur and to kick it into all the sin and mischief that such an ungovernable member, so 'ridden, was sure to fall into. He had no sooner quitted us, which he did when he married, than he made even us, who had always treated him with kindness, a mark for his slanderous humour. What he said we know not, because we chose not to know; but such things we were assured, and credibly too, as had we known them, would have been extremely offensive to us. Whether he be a Christian or not, is no business of mine to determine. There was a time when he seemed to have Christian experience, and there has been a much longer time in which, his attendance on ordinances excepted, he has manifested, I doubt, no one symptom of the Christian character. Prosperity did him harm: adversity, perhaps, may do him good. I wish it may; and if he be indeed a pupil of divine grace, it certainly will, when he has been sufficiently exercised with it; of which he seems, at present, to have a very promising prospect.

You judge well concerning the Prince,¹ and better than I did. His seducers are certainly most to be

¹ The Prince of Wales, afterwards George iv. See Letter of 4 March 1792.

blamed, and so I have been used both to say and to think; but when I wrote my last, they happened not to occur to me. That he and all dissolute princes are entitled to compassion on account of the snares to which their situation exposes them, is likewise a remark which I have frequently made myself, but did not on that occasion advert to it. But the day is come when it behoves princes to be a little more cautious. These allowances will not be made by the many, especially they will be apt to censure their excesses with a good deal of severity, if themselves should be called upon to pay the piper. That our royal hopes are not a little more discreet in their management at such a time as this seems utterly unaccountable, unless on a supposition that their practices have brought them to a state of blind and frantic desperation that will not suffer them to regard the consequences. The ministers of sedition are busy,—indefatigable indeed, and the expense that attends a kingly government is an argument which millions begin to feel the force of. But I shall tire you with my politics, and the more perhaps because they are so gloomy. The sable cloud, however, has a luminous edge. The unmanageable prince and the no less unmanageable multitude, have each a mouth into which God can thrust a curb when he pleases, and kings shall reign and the people obey to the last moment of His appointment.

Adieu, my dear friend; with our united love to yourself and Miss Catlett,—I remain affectionately yours,

Wm. COWPER.

Mr. Rose desires his respectful compliments.

TO LADY THROCKMORTON¹*Weston Lodge, Mar. 19, 1792.*

MY DEAR LADY FROG,—Suspect not that I am unmindful of you, nor break your heart with fears lest I should forget you, for that cannot be. If I have been silent thus long, it has been owing to no such cause; on the contrary I think of you continually, and of those who are with you. But I have letters to write without number, and letters that would admit of no delay, and to say truth I have been in daily expectation of a letter from you, understanding it to be the establish'd custom that the Friend who runs away shall write to the Friend that is left behind. But you are in a place where you can have no leisure for the observance of an old musty punctilio and I for that reason will be more generous than to expect it from you.

Your (poor) brother² to my great joy has recovered from a most painful disorder, and that alarmed me for him not a little. He suffered much, and for a day or two could only express himself by writing, but his sufferings, I hope, will prove beneficial in their consequences. Had I wanted to draw a character of conjugal affection and attention, Mrs. Gifford would have sat, set, sitten, for the picture. Doubtful which of these participles is best, two of them being warranted by custom, and one by grammar. I have therefore used them all.

The coach brought me on Saturday a packet from my bookseller, containing among other things a letter from Mr. Hayley. It is a handsome and even an affectionate one, and to my inexpressible

¹ See letter of 4 March 1792.

² Mr. Gifford.

confusion was written, as the date informed me, six weeks before I received it. For this I may thank the tardiness of Johnson. The purport of it was to disclaim all competition as a commentator on Milton, he being employed only to write the life of the Poet, that the world may not always be left under the impression of his last biographer's malignity.¹ In this I rejoice unfeignedly, for a Life of Milton is no part of my bargain, and since the notes are no part his, there can be no rivalry between us. Had there been any, I am verily persuaded that Hayley would have beat me hollow.

Mr. Rose informs me, having learnt it from William, that poor George has the gout and is confin'd again. Give my love to him, and tell him that I am truly sorry for it. I have a new task for him in the Italian way when he comes to Weston. The packet above-mentioned brought me a rare and curious book communicated by Mr. Stephens,² the Editor of Shakespeare, and from which Milton is supposed to have taken the hint of his great subject. It is the *Adamo of Andreini*,³ an odd business that will I fancy divert him much in the perusal. The first stanza of the prologue has been already noticed by Johnson, and the first line of it he has translated thus—‘ Let the rainbow be the

¹ That is, Dr. Johnson's ‘Milton’ in the *Lives of the Poets*.

² George Steevens (1736-1800), whose name Cowper writes ‘Stephens,’ was famous in his day as the industrious commentator on Shakespeare. His name appeared with Dr. Johnson's in a ten-volumed issue of the Plays in 1773. He was a member of ‘The Club’ that included Johnson, Burke, and Goldsmith.

³ Cowper and Hayley translated this poem into English under the title of ‘Adam: A Sacred Drama. Translated from the Italian of Gio. Battista Andreini.’ It occupies pages 239-387 of vol. x. of Southey's *Works of Cowper*.

fiddle-stick of the fiddle of Heaven'—I shall beg of George to look it over for me, and to make a note of all such passages as Milton may be reasonably supposed to have improved upon, and to have adopted into his *Paradise Lost*.

Mr. Rose, who has spent two or three days with me, promises me that he will call on you soon, and will deliver this into the hands of your fair Ladyship. The time approaches when your own promise to give us your company will I hope be accomplished. Mrs. Unwin and I both expect it with great pleasure, and trust that you will not disappoint us. She continues as well as when you saw us, and unites with mine her best and most affectionate remembrances to yourself, Sir John and his brother, neither is William forgotten nor any that are dear to you.— When you return from France, we will certainly, if we live and are well, fulfil our engagements and occupy our octagon at Bucklands.—Adieu, my dear Lady Frog, yours most truly,

W.M. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JAMES HURDIS

Weston, March 23, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have read your play¹ carefully, and with great pleasure; it seems now to be a performance that cannot fail to do you much credit. Yet, unless my memory deceives me, the scene between Cecilia and Heron in the garden has lost something that pleased me much when I saw it first; and I am not sure that you have not likewise obliterated an account of Sir Thomas's execution, that I found very pathetic. It would be strange if in these two particulars I should seem to miss

¹ *Sir Thomas More.*

what never existed; you will presently know whether I am as good at remembering what I never saw, as I am at forgetting what I have seen. But if I am right, I cannot help recommending the omitted passages to your reconsideration. If the play were designed for representation, I should be apt to think Cecilia's first speech rather too long, and should prefer to have it broken into dialogue, by an interposition now and then from one of her sisters. But since it is designed, as I understand, for the closet only, that objection seems of no importance; at no rate, however, would I expunge it; because it is both prettily imagined, and elegantly written.

I have read your *Cursory Remarks*, and am much pleased both with the style and the argument. Whether the latter be new or not, I am not competent to judge; if it be, you are entitled to much praise for the invention of it. Where other data are wanting to ascertain the time when an author of many pieces wrote each in particular, there can be no better criterion by which to determine the point, than the more or less proficiency manifested in the composition. Of this proficiency, where it appears, and of those plays in which it appears not, you seem to me to have judged well and truly; and consequently I approve of your arrangement.

I attended, as you desired me, in reading the character of Cecilia, to the hint you gave me concerning your sister Sally, and give you joy of such a sister. This however not exclusively of the rest, for though they may not be all Cecilias, I have a strong persuasion that they are all very amiable.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston Underwood, 24 March, 1792.

You think, and naturally enough, having seen me blazoned as the translator of Milton's Italian poems, that I am a master of this language. But the fact is otherwise.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH

The Lodge, March 25, 1792.

MY DEAREST COZ,—MR. ROSE'S longer stay than he at first intended was the occasion of the longer delay of my answer to your note, as you may both have perceived by the date thereof, and learned from his information. It was a daily trouble to me to see it lying in the window seat, while I knew you were in expectation of its arrival. By this time I presume you have seen him, and have seen likewise MR. HAYLEY'S friendly letter and complimentary sonnet, as well as the letter of the honest Quaker; all of which, at least the two former, I shall be glad to receive again at a fair opportunity. MR. HAYLEY'S letter slept six weeks in JOHNSON'S custody. It was necessary I should answer it without delay, and accordingly I answered it the very evening on which I received it, giving him to understand, among other things, how much vexation the bookseller's folly had cost me, who had detained it so long; especially on account of the distress that I knew it must have occasioned to him also. From his reply, which the return of the post brought me, I learn that in the long interval of my non-correspondence he had suffered anxiety and mortification enough; so much that I

dare say he made twenty vows never to hazard again either letter or compliment to an unknown author. What indeed could he imagine less, than that I meant by such an obstinate silence to tell him that I valued neither him nor his praises, nor his proffered friendship; in short that I considered him as a rival, and therefore, like a true author, hated and despised him? He is now, however, convinced that I love him, as indeed I do, and I account him the chief acquisition that my own verse has ever procured me. Brute should I be if I did not, for he promises me every assistance in his power.

I have likewise a very pleasing letter from Mr. Park, which I wish you were here to read; and a very pleasing poem that came enclosed in it for my revisal, written when he was only twenty years of age, yet wonderfully well written, though wanting some correction.

To Mr. Hurdis I return *Sir Thomas More* tomorrow; having revised it a second time. He is now a very respectable figure, and will do my friend, who gives him to the public this spring, considerable credit.

W. C.

TO THOMAS PARK

Weston Underwood, March 30, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,—If you have indeed so favourable an opinion of my judgment as you profess, which I shall not allow myself to question, you will think highly and honourably of your poem, for so I think of it. The view you give of the place that you describe is clear and distinct, the sentiments are just, the

reflections touching, and the numbers uncommonly harmonious. I give you joy of having been able to produce, at twenty years of age, what would not have disgraced you at a much later period, and, if you choose to print it, have no doubt that it will do you great credit.

You will perceive, however, when you receive your copy again, that I have used all the liberty you gave me. I have proposed many alterations; but you will consider them as only proposed. My lines are by no means obtruded on you, but are ready to give place to any that you should choose to substitute of your own composing. They will serve at least to mark the passages which seem to me susceptible of improvement, and the manner in which I think the change may be made. I have not always—have seldom indeed—given my reasons; but without a reason I have altered nothing, and the decision, as I say, is left with you in the last instance. Time failed me to be particular and explicit always in accounting for my strictures, and I assured myself that you would impute none of them to an arbitrary humour, but all to their true cause—a desire to discharge faithfully the trust committed to me.

I cannot but add, I think it a pity that you, who have evidently such talents for poetry, should be so loudly called another way, and want leisure to cultivate them; for if such was the bud, what might we not have expected to see in the full-blown flower? Perhaps, however, I am not quite prudent in saying all this to you, whose proper function is not that of a poet; but I say it, trusting to *your* prudence, that you will not suffer it to seduce you.

I have not the edition of Milton's juvenile poems which you mention, but shall be truly glad to see it, and thank you for the offer.

No possible way occurs to me of returning your ms. but by the Wellingborough coach; by that conveyance, therefore, I shall send it on Monday, and my remarks, rough as I made them, shall accompany it.

Believe me, with much sincerity, yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

March 30, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Johnson has for once been punctual, and I received last night the interleaved Milton together with his account. Money of mine has no chance for lying long at a banker's, and it is expedient you should be informed that I have already drawn for the sum specified . . .

My mornings, ever since you went, have been given to my correspondents: this morning I have already written a long letter to Mr. Park, giving my opinion of his poem, which is a favourable one. I forget whether I showed it to you when you were here, and even whether I had then received it. He has genius and delicate taste; and if he were not an engraver, might be one of our first hands in poetry.

I had need to have two heads, like Parnassus itself, to execute all of this sort that has been recommended to me.¹

W. C.

¹ Mr. Park, it seems, had also asked a literary question and proposed a subject for a poem.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Weston, April 5, 1792.

You talk, my dear friend, as John Bunyan says, like one that has the egg-shell still upon his head. You talk of the mighty favours that you have received from me, and forget entirely those for which I am indebted to you; but though you forget them, I shall not, nor even think that I have requited you, so long as any opportunity presents itself of rendering you the smallest service; small indeed is all that I can ever hope to render.

You now perceive, and sensibly, that not without reason I complained as I used to do of those tiresome rogues the printers. Bless yourself that you have not two thick quartos to bring forth as I had. My vexation was always much increased by this reflection: they are every day, and all day long, employed in printing for somebody, and why not for me? This was adding mortification to disappointment, so that I often lost all patience.

The suffrage of Dr. Robertson makes more than amends for the scurvy jest passed upon me by the wag unknown. I regard him not; nor, except for about two moments after I first heard of his doings, have I ever regarded him. I have somewhere a secret enemy; I know not for what cause he should be so, but he, I imagine, supposes that he has a cause; it is well, however, to have but one; and I will take all the care I can not to increase the number.

I have begun my notes, and am playing the

commentator manfully. The worst of it is, that I am anticipated, in almost all my opportunities to shine, by those who have gone before me.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, April 6, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—God grant that this friendship of ours may be a comfort to us all the rest of our days, in a world where true friendships are rarities, and especially where, suddenly formed, they are apt soon to terminate! But, as I said before, I feel a disposition of heart toward you that I never felt for one whom I had never seen; and that shall prove itself, I trust, in the event a propitious omen.

• • • • •
Horace says somewhere, though I may quote it amiss perhaps, for I have a terrible memory:

*Utrumque nostrum incredibili modo
Consentit astrum.—*

. . . Our *stars consent*, at least have had an influence somewhat similar in another and more important article.— . . .

It gives me the sincerest pleasure that I may hope to see you at Weston; for as to any migrations of mine, they must, I fear, notwithstanding the joy I should feel in being a guest of yours, be still considered in the light of impossibilities. Come then, my friend, and be as welcome, as the country people say here, as the flowers in May! I am happy, as I say, in the expectation; but the fear, or rather the consciousness that I shall

not answer on a nearer view, makes it a trembling kind of happiness, and a doubtful.

After the privacy which I have mentioned above, I went to Huntingdon; soon after my arrival there, I took up my quarters at the house of the Rev. Mr. Unwin; I lived with him while he lived, and ever since his death have lived with his widow. Her, therefore, you will find mistress of the house; and I judge of you amiss, or you will find her just such as you would wish. To me she has been often a nurse, and invariably the kindest friend through a thousand adversities that I have had to grapple with in the course of almost thirty years. I thought it better to introduce her to you thus, than to present her to you at your coming, quite a stranger.

Bring with you any books that you think may be useful to my commentatorship, for with you for an interpreter I shall be afraid of none of them. And in truth, if you think that you shall want them, you must bring books for your own use also, for they are an article with which I am *heinously unprovided*; being much in the condition of the man whose library Pope describes as

‘ No mighty store,
His own works neatly bound, and little more ! ’

You shall know how this has come to pass hereafter.

Tell me, my friend, are your letters in your own handwriting? If so, I am in pain for your eyes, lest by such frequent demands upon them I should hurt them. I had rather write you three letters for one, much as I prize your letters, than *that* should

happen. And now for the present, adieu;—I am going to accompany Milton into the lake of fire and brimstone, having just begun my annotations.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JAMES HURDIS

Weston, April 8, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,—Your entertaining and pleasant letter, resembling in that respect all that I receive from you, deserved a more expeditious answer; and should have had what it so well deserved, had it not reached me at a time when, deeply in debt to all my correspondents, I had letters to write without number. Like autumnal leaves that strew the brooks in *Vallombrosa*, the unanswered farrago lay before me. If I quote at all, you must expect me henceforth to quote none but Milton, since for a long time to come I shall be occupied with him only.

I was much pleased with the extract you gave me from your sister Eliza's letter; she writes very elegantly, and (if I might say it without seeming to flatter you) I should say much in the manner of her brother. It is well for your sister Sally that gloomy Dis is already a married man; else perhaps finding her, as he found Proserpine, studying botany in the fields, he might transport her to his own flowerless abode, where all her hopes of improvement in that science would be at an end for ever.

What letter of the 10th of December is that which you say you have not yet answered? Consider it is April now, and I never remember anything that I write half so long. But perhaps it

relates to Calchas, for I do remember that you have not yet furnished me with the secret history of him and his family, which I demanded from you. Adieu. Yours, most sincerely,

W. C.

I rejoice that you are so well with the learned Bishop of Sarum,¹ and well remember how he ferreted the vermin Lauder² out of all his hidings, when I was a boy at Westminster.

I have not yet studied with your last remarks before me, but hope soon to find an opportunity.

TO JOSEPH HILL

April 15, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I thank you for your remittance; which, to use the language of a song much in use when we were boys,

' Adds fresh beauties to the spring,
And makes all nature look more gay.'

What the author of the song had particularly in view when he thus sang, I know not; but probably it was not the sum of fifty pounds; which, as probably, he never had the happiness to possess. It was, most probably, some beautiful nymph,—beautiful in his eyes, at least,—who has long since become an old woman.

I have heard about my wether mutton³ from various quarters. First, from a sensible little man,

¹ John Douglas. See note, p. 107.

² William Lauder (1710-1771) wrote *An Essay on Milton's Use and Imitation of the Moderns in his Paradise Lost* (1751), and *The Grand Impostor Detected, or Milton Convicted of Forgery against King Charles the First* (1754). Cowper left Westminster in 1749.

³ A mistake in his translation of Homer.

curate of a neighbouring village;¹ then from Walter Bagot; then from Henry Cowper; and now from you. It was a blunder hardly pardonable in a man who has lived amid fields and meadows grazed by sheep, almost these thirty years. I have accordingly satirized myself in two stanzas which I composed last night while I lay awake, tormented with pain, and well dozed with laudanum. If you find them not very brilliant, therefore, you will know how to account for it.

Cowper had sinn'd with some excuse,
If, bound in rhyming tethers,
He had committed this abuse
Of changing ewes for wethers;

But, male for female is a trope,
Or rather bold misnomer,
That would have startled even Pope,
When he translated Homer.

Having translated all the Latin and Italian Miltonics, I was proceeding merrily with the Commentary on the Paradise Lost, when I was seized, a week since, with a most tormenting disorder; which has qualified me, however, to make some very feeling observations on that passage when I shall come to it:

—Ill fare our ancestor impure.

For this we may thank Adam;—and you may thank him too, that I am not able to fill my sheet, nor endure a writing posture any longer. I conclude abruptly, therefore; but sincerely subscribing myself, with my best compliments to Mrs. Hill, your affectionate,

W.M. COWPER.

¹ Rev. John Buchanan, curate of Ravenstone. He resided at Weston.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston Underwood, 15 April, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER,—In the encouragement you give me to hope that I shall have the happiness of seeing you here about the latter end of May, I find great consolations, though in a season of great pain. I shall wish as much as you that no third person may interfere in the shape of a visitor, nor do I expect anybody exactly at that time. Should any threaten us I will, if possible, put him by. Mrs. Unwin begs me to express to you her sense of the kindness with which you mention her in your last; she is always prepared to love everybody that loves me, and therefore to love you warmly. She is the Mary to whom I addressed my *Winter Nosegay*,¹ and her son, one of the most amiable of men, but now deceased, afforded the subject of the last of my little pieces. I ought not to have mentioned my pain before I had the opportunity to give you some account of it, for I have so much faith in your friendship for me as verily to believe that I may have grieved and alarmed you by doing so, more than there is need. It is only occasioned by a disorder which rhimes to smiles, though with smiles it has nothing to do, but rather much with frowns and wry faces. It seized me above a week since; and still continues, though the fury of it begins to abate, extremely troublesome. Better physic; but such as they tell me is a pledge of good health for a considerable time to come.

¹ *Globe Ed.* p. 174.

No, my friend, fear not that I shall ever treat a may-flower, as you, like a loathsome weed ; if I know myself at all, I am neither cruel nor capricious, and now I will be a fool and tell you my dream. I dreamed last night that a beautiful red-breast, while I sat in the open-air, flew to me and perched on my knee. There it stood quietly awhile to be stroked, and then crept into my bosom. I never in my waking hours felt a tenderer love for anything than I felt for the little animal in my sleep, and were it possible that I could ever actually meet with such an incident, I could as soon reject poor Bob and trample him under my foot, for which I should deserve death, as I could show unkindness to a certain William of Sussex who reposes so much confidence in one :

And think you truly that my wit has shone
With more conspicuous lustre than your own ?
Ah, fear to make a coxcomb of your friend,
Endangered most of all when *you* commend !

Whether you or I have the most genius I know not, nor care a fig ; God gives to every man as He pleases, and I should make Him a very unsuitable return for the little He has given me, did I allow myself to repine that He has given others more. And now that I have once called you my friend, I defy even you to shine at such a rate as to excite in me any other sentiments than those of pleasure and congratulation. I have therefore now two strings to my bow, and shall rejoice hereafter, not in my own success only, should success attend me, but in yours also. Very heroic, truly, some people would say and sneer. It may, for aught I know,

be heroic, but to all this heroism there is only one thing necessary, which is that we have a real friendship where we profess one.

You are better acquainted with my writings than, to my shame be it spoken, I am with yours. I have been such a writer ever since I wrote for the public at all, that I have read nothing. But this is a fault which, with respect to you at least, I shall mend on the first opportunity. Your luckless Dramas,¹ as you call them, I received six months ago, and they have been my parlour window book ever since. I was greatly struck with the evident facility with which they were written. These I borrowed and they were sent to me out of Norfolk. A cousin of mine, Lady Hesketh by name, who loves the very sound of yours, has often almost scolded me for not being better acquainted with your works that she so much admires; but I have always replied: ‘If Hayley were twice as divine as you think him, how the deuce is it possible that I should read his volumes and at the same time translate Homer! You are reasonable, though a woman —answer me this or be satisfied.’

And now, my dear friend, adieu; with my cordial and best wishes of your happiness, and with eager expectation for your coming, in both which I am joined sincerely by Mrs. Unwin,—I remain, your affectionate,

W.M. COWPER.

TO LADY THROCKMORTON

Weston, April 16, 1792.

MY DEAR LADY FROG,—I thank you for your letter, as sweet as it was short, and as sweet as good

¹ *Poems and Plays* by W. Hayley, 6 vols., 1788.

news could make it. You encourage a hope that has made me happy ever since I have entertained it. And if my wishes can hasten the event, it will not be long suspended. As to your jealousy, I mind it not, or only to be pleased with it. It is at least some proof of your care, and if kept within bounds of decency, so that you neither scold me nor clapper-claw me, will for that reason do me good. I shall say no more on the subject at present than this, that of all ladies living, a certain lady,¹ whom I need not name, would be the lady of my choice for a certain gentleman,² were the whole sex submitted to my election.

What a delightful anecdote is that which you tell me of a young lady detected in the very act of stealing our Catharina's praises; is it possible that she can survive the shame, the mortification of such a discovery? Can she ever see the same company again, or any company that she can suppose by the remotest possibility may have heard the tidings? If she can, she must have an assurance equal to her vanity. A lady in London stole my song on the broken Rose, or rather would have stolen, and have passed it for her own. But she too was unfortunate in her attempt; for there happened to be a female cousin of mine in company, who knew that I had written it. It is really very flattering to a poet's pride, that the ladies should thus hazard every thing for the sake of appropriating his verses. I may say with Milton, that I am fallen *on evil tongues and evil days*, being not only plundered of that which belongs to me, but being charged with that which does not. Thus it seems (and I have learned it from more

¹ Catharina (Miss Stapleton).

² George Courtenay.

quarters than one), that a report is, and has been some time, current in this and the neighbouring counties, that though I have given myself the air of declaiming against the Slave Trade in the *Task*, I am in reality a friend to it ; and last night I received a letter from Joe Rye,¹ to inform me that I have been much traduced and calumniated on this account. Not knowing how I could better or more effectually refute the scandal, I have this morning sent a copy [of verses] to the Northampton paper,² prefaced by a short letter to the printer, specifying the occasion. The verses are in honour of Mr. Wilberforce,³ and sufficiently expressive of my present sentiments on the subject. You are a wicked fair one for disappointing us of our expected visit, and therefore out of mere spite I will not insert them. I have been very ill these ten days, and for the same spite's sake will not tell you what has ailed me. But lest you should die of a fright, I will have the mercy to tell you that I am recovering.

Mrs. Gifford and her little ones are gone, but your brother is still here. I asked him this morning how long he should stay, and he could not tell. How then should I ? but he told me that he had some expectations of Sir John at Weston, which I was happy to hear. Heaven, however, only knows whether his intelligence is much to be relied on, for this is one of the days in which his mind is much on the ramble. I can only say if he comes, I shall

¹ Rev. Joseph Jekyll Rye, vicar of Dallington, near Northampton.

² *The Northampton Mercury.* See *Globe Ed.* p. 384.

³ Wilberforce resided subsequently at Emberton Rectory near Olney. Says Mr. John Bowdler : ‘ He carried me one day to Weston, and we wandered over many a spot which Cowper’s feet had trod, and gazed on the scenes which his pen had immortalized.’

most heartily rejoice once more to see him at a table so many years his own.—Adieu, my dear Lady Frog. Mrs. U—— sends you her affectionate respects, and, with mine to all your party, I remain, ever yours,
Totus tuus—Toot,¹

W. C.

TO THE REV. J. JEKYLL RYE

Weston, April 16, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am truly sorry that you should have suffered any apprehensions, such as your letter indicates, to molest you for a moment. I believe you to be as honest a man as lives, and consequently do not believe it possible that you could in your letter to Mr. Pitts, or any otherwise, wilfully misrepresent me. In fact you did not; my opinions on the subject in question were, when I had the pleasure of seeing you, such as in that letter you stated them to be, and such they still continue.

If any man concludes, because I allow myself the use of sugar and rum, that therefore I am a friend to the *Slave Trade*, he concludes rashly, and does me great wrong; for the man lives not who abhors it more than I do. My reasons for my own practice are satisfactory to myself, and they whose practice is contrary are, I suppose, satisfied with theirs. So far is good. Let every man act according to his own judgment and conscience: but if we condemn another for not seeing with our eyes, we are unreasonable; and if we reproach him on that account, we are uncharitable, which is a still greater evil.

I had heard, before I received the favour of yours,

¹ ‘Mr. Toot’ was little Tom Gifford’s rendering of ‘Mr. Cowper.’ So Cowper sometimes signs himself ‘Toot.’

that such a report of me, as you mention, had spread about the country. But my informant told me that it was founded thus : The people of Olney petitioned Parliament for the abolition ; my name was sought among the subscribers, but was not found : a question was asked, how that happened ? Answer was made, that I had once indeed been an enemy to the Slave Trade, but had changed my mind ; for that having lately read a history or an account of Africa, I had seen it there asserted, that till the commencement of that traffic the negroes, multiplying at a prodigious rate, were necessitated to devour each other : for which reason I had judged it better, that the trade should continue, than that they should be again reduced to so horrid a custom.

Now all this is a fable. I have read no such history ; I never in my life read any such assertion ; nor, had such an assertion presented itself to me, should I have drawn any such conclusion from it : on the contrary, bad as it were, I think it would be better the negroes should have eaten one another, than that we should carry them to market. The single reason why I did not sign the petition was, because I was never asked to do it ; and the reason why I was never asked was, because I am not a parishioner of Olney.¹

Thus stands the matter. You will do me the justice, I dare say, to speak of me as of a man who abhors the commerce, which is now I hope in a fair way to be abolished, as often as you shall find occasion. And I beg you henceforth to do yourself the justice

¹ 1792, March 8.—‘The petition against the Slave Trade was brought by Bean, Sutcliff, and Hillyard to be signed’ (i.e. the vicar, and Baptist and Congregational ministers).—*Teedon's Diary*.

to believe it impossible that I should for a moment suspect you of duplicity or misrepresentation. I have been grossly slandered, but neither by you, nor in consequence of any thing that you have either said or written.—I remain therefore, still as heretofore, with great respect, *much and truly* yours,

W. C.

Mrs. Unwin's compliments attend you.

TO THE NORTHAMPTON MERCURY

To the Printers of the Northampton Mercury

Weston Underwood, 16 April 1792.

SIRS,—Having lately learned that it is pretty generally reported, both in your county and in this, that my present opinion, concerning the Slave Trade, differs totally from that which I have heretofore given to the public, and that I am no longer an enemy but a friend to that horrid traffic; I entreat you to take an early opportunity to insert in your paper the following lines, written no longer since than this very morning, expressly for the two purposes of doing just honour to the gentleman with whose name they are inscribed, and of vindicating myself from an aspersion so injurious.—I am, etc.,

W. COWPER.

SONNET

TO WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

'Thy country, Wilberforce, with just disdain,' etc.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

The Lodge, 24 April 1792.

I AM now nearly recovered from my awkward malady, but it has been a sad hindrance to me in

my literary labours; I had proceeded in my commentary almost through the first book of the *Paradise Lost*, when it brought me to a stand, and from contemplating a lake of brimstone, I was obliged to pass at once into a brimstone regimen.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH

. *The Lodge, April 26, 1792.*

MY DEAREST COZ,—I have been very ill, but nobody must ask what I have ailed; yet if any should be rash enough after this prohibition to insist upon knowing what, you may tell them that I have suffered by that excruciating disorder with which God visited the Philistines while the ark was captive among them. I am now, however, after more than a fortnight's confinement, pretty well restored again, and walked yesterday for the first time.

I will endeavour when Hayley comes to greet him with a countenance that shall not stiffen him into freestone, but cannot be answerable for my success. It will depend in some measure on the countenance that he presents himself; for whether I will or not, I am always a physiognomist, and if I dislike a man's looks, am sure to assume such as he will find equally disagreeable. But I hope better things from my friend Hayley. It seldom happens that a person so amiable in his disposition is very Gorgonian in his aspect.

I have a great respect for Mr. Frogatt. His behaviour to young Hesketh, as well as his constancy to Mr. Rose, both entitle him to it. It

gives me pleasure, for your sake especially, that Sir Robert is so affectionately disposed toward his grandson. I know that you interest yourself much in the young man's welfare, and therefore, both on that account and on that which so much influences yourself (respect for the memory of Sir Thomas) shall always be glad to hear of his prosperity.

I am glad that you found Mr. Mackenzie so agreeable; should his new office occasion him to settle in town, you will have him, I suppose, for a visitor. Thanks for Hannah More's verses, which, like all that she writes, are neatly executed, and handsomely turned. I shall this instant transcribe for you some of mine, which I found it necessary to publish in the last *Northampton Mercury*, attested with my name at length, in order to clear my character from a calumny that had spread all over the country concerning my real opinion of the slave trade. This I learned not from the Quaker's letter only, but from Joe Rye also, who kindly wrote on purpose to apprise me of it.

The Hills, I know, dislike sonnets, therefore send not this to them,—else do what you please with it. For my own part I like them much, when they are on subjects proper to them; such, I mean, as are best expressed in a close sententious manner, for they are too short to admit of a loose one.

I love and honour any lady who means me a present; but, if, as I suspect, Mrs. D—— C—— be the lady in question, I must beg leave to waive it. I have rendered her no service worthy of a requital, and should be ashamed to receive any. A portfolio with a lock to it would be very convenient to me, and therefore very acceptable from any other fair

hand than that of the lady abovesaid. Thanks for an incomparable cheese.

With Mrs. Unwin's affectionate remembrances, I am most truly thine,

Wm. COWPER.

P.S.—I was shocked, very much shocked, at Dr. Madan's rencontre; the human head, at the age of his, is very little fitted to sustain a blow from a London ruffian.

TO THOMAS PARK

Weston Underwood, April 27, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I write now merely to prevent any suspicion in your mind that I neglect you. I have been very ill, and for more than a fortnight unable to use the pen, or you should have heard long ere now of the safe arrival of your packet. I have revised the Elegy on Seduction,¹ but have not as yet been able to proceed farther. The best way of returning these, which I have now in hand, will be to return them with those which you propose to send hereafter. I will make no more apologies for any liberties that it may seem necessary to me to take with your copies. Why do you send them, but that I may exercise that freedom, of which the very act of sending them implies your permission? I will only say, therefore, that you must neither be impatient nor even allow yourself to think me tardy, since assuredly I will not be more so than I needs must be. My hands are pretty full. Milton must be forwarded, and is at present hardly begun; and I have beside a numerous correspond-

¹ It appears in Mr. Park's volume of *Sonnets and Miscellaneous Poems*.

ence, which engrosses more of my time than I can at present well afford to it. I cannot decide with myself whether the lines in which the reviewers are so smartly noticed had better be expunged or not. Those lines are gracefully introduced and well written ; for which reasons I should be loth to part with them. On the other hand, how far it may be prudent to irritate a body of critics, who certainly much influence the public opinion, may deserve consideration. It may be added, too, that they are not all equally worthy of the lash : there are among them men of real learning, judgment, and candour. I must leave it, therefore, to your own determination.

I thank you for Thomson's Epitaph, on which I have only to remark, (and I am sure that I do it not in a captious spirit), that, since the poet is himself the speaker, I cannot but question a little the propriety of the quotation subjoined. It is a prayer, and when the man is buried, the time of prayer is over. I know it may be answered, that it is placed there merely for the benefit of the reader ; but all readers of tombstones are not wise enough to be trusted for such an interpretation.

I was well pleased with your poem on — and equally well pleased with your intention not to publish it. It proves two points of consequence to an author : both that you have an exuberant fancy, and discretion enough to know how to deal with it. The man is as formidable for his ludicrous talent, as he has made himself contemptible by his use of it. To despise him therefore is natural, but it is wise to do it in secret.

Since the juvenile poems of Milton were edited

by Warton, you need not trouble yourself to send them. I have them of his edition already.—I am, dear sir, affectionately yours, Wm. Cowper.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston Underwood, 1st May, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND.—To relieve you as soon as possible from all anxiety on my account, I will begin by telling you that I am in a great measure recovered from my late disorder. In fact I am now waiting for those salutary effects of it which the skilful in such matters, while I was suffering intolerable pain, predicted to me for my comfort. I cannot say I find them yet. On the contrary, I feel myself pretty much enfeebled by the loss of my usual air and exercise, and have had a weakness in one of my eyes, attended with some slight degree of inflammation ever since I began to recover. But all in good time—we shall see. A thousand thanks to you for your affectionate prose, and for your verse not less affectionate. They have both done me good like a medicine, and sky-lark as I am, and troubled as I have been with the pip, I know nothing so likely to set me singing again as your kindness.

And now, lest I should forget it again, let me thank you in good time for your repeated offer to bring me any book that I may want in particular. I doubt not that there are twenty books at least for which I have particular occasion; knew I but their names. But in fact I know little or nothing, and that I tell you so before-hand is much less the effect of modesty than good policy. I do it to

prepare you for a discovery which you will be sure to make when I shall have the happiness to see you, and which will shock you the less in being announced. There are certain Latin poets that I have seen ages ago of whom Vida¹ is one, and which have been recommended to my perusal on this occasion. But I have so little faith in my own industry that I hardly dare venture to say, pray bring them, lest I should trouble you in vain. In truth and in reality I am sadly made up for an editor, as I have told you already and shall soon convince you, and had it not been for my foolish bookseller, who would buckle this honour to my back, to bear the burthen whether I would no, I had never been one.

I received on Saturday a letter from a clergyman whom I have never seen, in which, supposing that I shall write a life of Milton, he tells me that he has been informed that there are several curious and interesting anecdotes relative to the private life of our author to be found in the Ashmolean Museum. I would give the world that I had a friend at Oxford whom I could employ this moment to rummage the whole collection for you from one end to the other. But I have not a literary friend upon earth except yourself, unhappy man as you are to be the only one of that character destined to be so befriended! You, however, have many, and probably some within reach of this treasure, who will be ready to explore it for you.

I cannot bear that you should talk of shorn beams,

¹ Vida, Marco Girolamo (born about 1480, died 1556), one of the learned men of the Court of Leo x. He wrote *Christiados* and many other poems.

'Immortal Vida! on whose honoured brow,' etc.

Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, line 705.

and imagine that your *shining time is over*. How can that possibly be, at your age of forty-seven?¹ No, no, much of your day is still unspent, and ere your sun goes down you will, I doubt not, break forth again. To tell you the truth, however, I am often haunted with similar suspicions about myself. But then I was older than you are when I began to glitter, and yet when such thoughts trouble me I strive against them, and so must you, else we shall create to ourselves the evil that we fear, and anticipate the effects of age while we are yet in good liking.²

I am happy that Milton is so much your idol, and happy especially that you are to be his biographer. Oh that Johnson!³ how does every page of his on the subject, ay, almost every paragraph, kindle my indignation! Warton in truth is not much better. The churchman on one side and the Tory on the other have almost plucked him bald. But you will do him justice, and under your hands his laurels will grow again.

Mrs. Unwin says to me, ‘Take care of yourself—William the Second is coming.’ ‘With all my heart,’ I say, ‘and the sooner the better.’

Adieu, my dear Hayley, pardon all this scrambling talk, and believe me with sincere delight in the hope of seeing you soon, most truly yours,

Wm. COWPER.

That a drama of yours should be suppressed for want of merit I cannot believe; that it might,

¹ Cowper was sixty.

² Their young ones are in good liking (= condition), Job xxxix. 4.

³ See the ‘Thresh his old Jacket’ letter, 31st October 1779.

through the liberal disdain that you would feel of a manager's insolence, I can credit easily.

TO LADY HESKETH

Weston, May 5, 1792.

MY DEAREST COZ,—I rejoice, as thou reasonably supposest me to do, in the matrimonial news communication in your last. Not that it was altogether news to me, for twice I had received broad hints of it from Lady Frog by letter, and several times *vivâ voce* while she was here. But she enjoined *me* secrecy as well as *you*, and you know that all secrets are safe with me; safer far than the winds in the bags of Æolus. I know not in fact the lady¹ whom it would give me more pleasure to call Mrs. Courtenay, than the lady in question; partly because I know her, but especially because I know her to be all that I can wish in a neighbour.

I have often observed that there is a regular alternation of good and evil in the lot of men, so that a favourable incident may be considered as the harbinger of an unfavourable one, and *vice versa*. Dr. Madan's experience witnesses to the truth of this observation. One day he gets a broken head, and the next a mitre to heal it. I rejoice that he has met with so effectual a cure, though my joy is not unmixed with concern; for till now I had some hope of seeing him, but since I live in the North, and his episcopal call is in the West, that is a gratification I suppose which I must no longer look for.

¹ Miss Stapleton.

My sonnet, which I sent you, was printed in the Northampton paper last week, and this week it produced me a complimentary one¹ in the same paper, which served to convince me, at least by the matter of it, that my own was not published without occasion, and that it had answered its purpose.

My correspondence with Hayley proceeds briskly, and is very affectionate on both sides. I expect him here in about a fortnight, and wish heartily, with Mrs. Unwin, that you would give him a meeting. I have promised him indeed that he shall find us alone, but you are one of the family.

I wish much to print the following lines in one of the daily papers. Lord S.'s vindication of the poor culprit² in the affair of Cheit-Sing has confirmed me in the belief that he has been injuriously treated, and I think it an act merely of justice to take a little notice of him.

TO WARREN HASTINGS, ESQ.

BY AN OLD SCHOOLFELLOW OF HIS AT WESTMINSTER

HASTINGS ! I knew thee young, and of a mind,
While young, humane, conversable, and kind ;
Nor can I well believe thee, gentle THEN,
Now grown a villain, and the WORST of men ;
But rather some suspect, who have oppress'd
And worried thee, as not themselves the BEST.

If thou wilt take the pains to send them to thy newsmonger, I hope thou wilt do well.—Adieu !

W. C.

¹ By S. McClellan. See my *Life of William Cowper*, p. 559.

² Impeachment of Warren Hastings. His trial lasted from 13th February 1788 to 23rd April 1795. Cheyte Sing, or Chait Singh, was the ruling Hindoo prince of Benares, and from him Hastings, as the East India Company's representative, had extracted what was urged by many to be an extortionate fine.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston Underwood, 9 May, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Tell me if you have ever seen the poem of which the following purports to be a fragment. The specimen is such that one cannot but wish for the whole.

Away goes Sussex William with his pack
Of Buckingamian acres at his back,
And, as he trudges off with Weston, feels
The gentle Ouse cascading at his heels ;
Then, Buckshire William lifting in his turn,
Beneath one arm Ouse gathers and his urn,
Beneath the other Eartham and her swain,
And back to Weston, Weston bears again.

While I am commenting on the *Paradise Lost* I comfort myself continually with reflecting that I write what nobody will ever read. It is in fact a wonderful thing, and no small disgrace to us English that being natives of a country that has produced the finest poem in the world, so few of us ever look into it. I am acquainted myself with at least a score, who account themselves pretty good judges of poetry too, and persons of taste, who yet know no more of the poem than the mere subject of it, and would be ignorant even of that if they did not learn it from the title. Poor encouragement, my brother bard, to us who sometimes feel a wish at least to be known to posterity. I have finished, however, my notes on the two first books, and, if nobody else will read them, am resolved that you shall, that you may tell me whether or not they are so far well executed as to

be worthy to sleep on the shelves of those who will never disturb them.

How it came to pass that I have filled so much of my paper with these dry remarks, I know not, for, sure it is, that the matter of them was far from being uppermost in my thoughts even while I wrote them. That place is given at present only to yourself and to your journey hither. Mary can vouch for me, and I can vouch for Mary that we think of nothing else, as is sufficiently proved by our conversing on that theme only. ‘Hayley will like this wilderness,’ we say, as we walk, ‘and Hayley will be prodigiously pleased with that prospect, and they are so near at hand that it will not fatigue him to reach them,’ and thus we make you the burthen of our song upon all occasions. But lest I should forget, as I am very apt to do, the most material thing I have to say, let me tell you this moment that from the ‘George’ at Wooburn you must proceed to the ‘Swan’ at Newport Pagnell, and thence to Weston. Your driver will probably know the door, and every inch of the way is turnpike. From Newport hither five miles only and about a quarter.

We have no commissions to trouble you with, and in truth I think, considering what a luggage of books you bring with you, there is no need that we should. Never, I believe, did one editor take such pains to assist and accommodate another editor before, and an editor of the same work too. It is a prodigy in the world of letters, and all that world would think so, if they knew it. God bless you, my dear friend, and give you a good journey! Mary says Amen! and her Amen is always one of the sincerest that ever was uttered.

How dare you drink no wine, and a poet too !
 Know you not that poets have been always wine-bibbers, and that Horace has doomed to oblivion all verse written by those who drink it not. Here, indeed, I have the advantage, and Mary and I will both take care, for my glory's sake, that if you choose milk you shall have enough.—Adieu, *mio caro amico*, or *amico caro mio*, for I know not which is best, and believe me, with my own and Mary's affectionate and best wishes for your safe arrival,
 truly yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Tuesday, 12 May [1792 perhaps].

DEAR SIR,—I am happy to be able to inform you that Mrs. Unwin's recovery is constant though still gradual, and that yesterday she could walk with hardly any support. She has had a tolerable night, is cheerful this morning, and articulates pretty distinctly. The text given you on Sunday was much blest to her.—Yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO LADY THROCKMORTON

Weston, May 12th, 1792.

MY DEAR LADY FROG,—Unwilling to let slip the occasion of Archer's journey to London without sending you a line, I seize a minute or two I have to spare, merely to say, how do you ? and to tell you, because perhaps you never received it, that I sent a letter to Bucklands, addressed to you, but as I have been informed, you had returned to town before it arrived there. I will add likewise, because

I believe that though you live in a tempest of engagements you now and then find leisure for a thought of me, that though I have been very ill I am now very well again, and that Mrs. Unwin is as well as usual, except that having been much flurried yesterday evening by an accident that happened to poor John Brittain at our gate, she suffers from it this morning, and probably will for some days to come. Entering our yard with a waggon of coals he was unfortunately pressed between the shaft and the gate post and terribly bruised, but we hope not mortally. The kind Dr. G.¹ gave his immediate attendance, as he always does upon summons, and his best advice of course.

How long is the Hall to remain unoccupied except by the said doctor? I wait with impatience for the conclusion of an affair² in which I feel myself most warmly interested. Give my best love to the parties, and tell Sir John that he and his Mary are often in my thoughts in the course of every day. I am very busy with Milton, and expect my brother editor Hayley here on Tuesday, who will spend a fortnight with us.—Adieu my old young friend, with Mrs. Unwin's affectionate remembrances, I am yours,

W.M. COWPER.

Little Buchy³ begged me to give his comp'ts. when I wrote next.

As the following letter shows, Hayley now made his first visit to Weston.

¹ Dr. Gregson.

² Marriage of Mr. George Courtenay to Miss Stapleton.

³ Rev. John Buchanan, curate of Ravenstone.

TO JOHN JOHNSON¹*Weston, May 20, 1792.*

MY DEAREST OF ALL JOHNNIES,—I am not sorry that your ordination is postponed. A year's learning and wisdom, added to your present stock, will not be more than enough to satisfy the demands of your function. Neither am I sorry that you find it difficult to fix your thoughts to the serious point at all times. It proves at least that you attempt and wish to do it, and these are good symptoms. Woe to those who enter on the ministry of the Gospel without having previously asked at least from God a mind and spirit suited to their occupation, and whose experience never differs from itself, because they are always alike vain, light, and inconsiderate. It is therefore matter of great joy to me to hear you complain of levity, and such it is to Mrs. Unwin. She is, I thank God, tolerably well, and loves you. As to the time of your journey hither, the sooner after June the better; till then we shall have company.

I forget not my debts to your dear sister, and your aunt Balls. Greet them both with a brother's kiss, and place it to my account. I will write to them when Milton and a thousand other engagements will give me leave. Mr. Hayley is here on a visit. We have formed a friendship that I

¹ This letter contained the lines *To Sir John Fenn*, to whom Mr. Johnson at once sent them. See *The Unpublished and Uncollected Poems of William Cowper*.

trust will last for life, and render us an edifying example to all future poets.

Adieu! Lose no time in coming after the time mentioned.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Don't come up this evening.

Wednesday, 23 May, '92.

DEAR SIR,—I take the first moment I have been able to find to tell you that Mrs. Unwin received yesterday a second stroke¹ like that she had in the beginning of the year. It is accordingly a season of great trouble with us, as you may still suppose. God only knows whether I shall ever see her restored again. The blow is a much severer than the former was. If any thing can be done, it must be done I suppose by prayer. I express myself thus, because you know my doubts concerning the efficiency even of that.—

Yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH

Weston, May 24, 1792.

I WISH with all my heart, my dearest coz, that I had not ill news for the subject of the present letter. My friend, my Mary, has again been attacked by the same disorder that threatened me last year with the loss of her, and of which you were yourself a witness. Gregson would not allow that first stroke to be paralytic, but this he

¹ 1792, May 23.—Mary Andrew came in about 5 and told us Mrs. Unwin was taken ill last night with a stroke of the palsy yesterday eve. $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour afterwards I recd. a note from the Esqr. desiring me to pray for them but not to come up that night.—*Teedon's Diary.*

acknowledges to be so; and with respect to the former, I never had myself any doubt that it was; but this has been much the severest. Her speech has been almost unintelligible from the moment that she was struck; it is with difficulty that she opens her eyes, and she cannot keep them open, the muscles necessary to the purpose being contracted; and as to self-moving powers, from place to place, and the use of her right hand and arm, she has entirely lost them.

It happened well, that of all men living the man most qualified to assist and comfort me is here, though till within these few days I never saw him, and a few weeks since had no expectation that I ever should. You have already guessed that I mean Hayley. Hayley who loves me as if he had known me from my cradle. When he returns to town, as he must, alas! too soon, he will pay his respects to you.

I will not conclude without adding that our poor patient is beginning, I hope, to recover from this stroke also; but her amendment is slow, as must be expected at her time of life and in such a disorder. I am as well myself as you have ever known me in a time of much trouble, and even better.

It was not possible to prevail on Mrs. Unwin to let me send for Dr. Kerr, but Hayley has written to his friend Dr. Austin a representation of her case, and we expect his opinion and advice to-morrow. In the mean time, we have borrowed an electrical machine from our neighbour Socket, the effect of which she tried yesterday, and the day before, and we think it has been of material service.

She was seized while Hayley and I were walking, and Mr. Greatheed,¹ who called while we were absent, was with her.

I forgot in my last to thank thee for the proposed amendments of thy friend. Whoever he is, make my compliments to him, and thank him. The passages to which he objects have been all altered; and when he shall see them new dressed, I hope he will like them better.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH

The Lodge, May 26, 1792.²

MY DEAREST COUSIN,—Knowing that you will be anxious to learn how we go on, I write a few lines to inform you that Mrs. Unwin daily recovers a little strength, and a little power of utterance; but she seems strongest, and her speech is most distinct, in a morning. Hayley has been all in all to us on this very afflictive occasion. Love him, I charge you, dearly for my sake. Where could I have found a man, except himself, who could have made himself so necessary to me in so short a time, that I absolutely know not how to live without him?

Adieu, my dear sweet coz. Mrs. Unwin, as plainly as her poor lips can speak, sends her best love, and Hayley threatens in a few days to lay close siege to your affections in person. W. C.

There is some hope, I find, that the Chancellor

¹ Rev. Samuel Greatheed.

² On this day Cowper wrote the lines *To Dr. Austin* in acknowledgement of the gratuitous assistance given by him to Mrs. Unwin in her illness. See *Globe Ed.* p. 384.

may continue in office, and I shall be glad if he does; because we have no single man worthy to succeed him.

I open my letter again to thank you, my dearest coz, for yours just received. Though happy, as you well know, to see *you* at all times, we have no need, and I trust shall have none, to trouble you with a journey made on purpose; yet once again, I am willing and desirous to believe, we shall be a happy trio at Weston; but unless necessity dictates a journey of charity, I wish all yours hither to be made for pleasure. Farewell. Thou shalt know how we go on.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Monday, 28 May, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—Mrs. Unwin, I hope, still mends and still gathers a little strength, but I have been sadly desponding all this morning and had a terrible night. Her right side is indeed so perfectly disabled that I have hardly any hope that she can ever be herself again. The Lord heals indeed, and He can restore health to her. I should suppose, too, from the tenor of your notices, that He intends it, but there is danger that we may interpret literally what He means should bear a spiritual sense only. Time must explain His purpose.

We both thank you for your fervent prayers on our behalf, and are glad that you had so happy a Sabbath.—Yours in much haste,

Wm. COWPER.

TO THE REV. THOMAS CARWARDINE,¹ AT MRS. BUTLER'S,
JAMES STREET, BUCKINGHAM GATE, LONDON

Weston Underwood, May 28, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,—Ceremony perhaps might teach me to address a stranger with an air more distant and reserved, but I gratify my feelings toward *you* by addressing you as one with whom I am well acquainted. In fact, I am and must be dull indeed, if I did not learn from the delicacy of the compliment you have just paid me, by presenting my books to the Chancellor's daughter,² that you are one of the few whom I hold as the men of my heart, and whom, had I an opportunity to cultivate an intimacy with you, I should love most dearly. I tell Hayley he is one of the happiest men in the world to have had the fortune to form friendships with some of the best and kindest spirits that it has to boast of.

I take encouragement from your kindness to give you a little trouble, which however I have reason to be satisfied will be none to you, and will beg you to transcribe into one of the blank leaves of my first volume, or wheresoever you can find room for them, the two beautiful sonnets, in which our dear common friend³ has celebrated both me and Mrs. Unwin; me, indeed, far above my deserts, but not her. To yourself and to Hayley⁴ I shall owe it, if the Chancellor's friendship for me, which I know was once sincere and fervent, should now at last, in the latter end of our days, recover itself and glow again. But

¹ A friend of Hayley's.

² Miss Thurlow.

³ Hayley.

⁴ When Hayley was at Weston Cowper explained to him the state of his circumstances, and Hayley presently approached Lord Thurlow with a view to obtaining assistance for his friend.

whether so or not, I shall always have reason to account myself equally indebted to you both. May God bless you! Believe me, with true esteem and a quick sense of your kindness, your affectionate, humble servant,

W.M. COWPER.

Of one Sonnet you have a copy, and I transcribe the other on the opposite side.

I know not what you will think of *my* delicacy, who have here transcribed my own eulogy, and such an eulogy too! not without blushes, I can assure you, but Hayley desired me to do it, and to him I am bound to refuse nothing.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Wednesday, 30 May, '92.

DEAR SIR,—Mrs. Unwin is better. She has greatly recovered her speech, and begins to set her right foot to the ground and bear upon it. Her features, too, are considerably restored to their former position once more. I begin to hope that all will be well.—
Yours,

W.M. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Tues., noon, probably June 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I write because you seem disappointed when I do not, but have nothing new to send.

Mrs. Unwin seems to be every day a little better, but so little, that it will cost the whole summer and autumn to restore her, proceeding as she does and supposing no interruption to happen.

My work is all of a stand, and I have written to tell Johnson that in all appearance it will be impossible for me to be ready at the time.

Unbelief on my part in my present circumstances is unavoidable. In all my concerns I feel and see an express contradiction to every promise that you have ever received on my account, and particularly in the affair of Milton.—Yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Weston, June 2, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I should have acknowledged the receipt of your kind letter before the arrival of your second, and the receipt of your second by yesterday's post, had not the present been a time of most interesting and anxious occupation with me, who have had poor Mrs. Unwin to attend to in an illness that seized her suddenly about a fortnight since, similar to that with which she was afflicted last December. During many days she had no use of her right side, and could hardly speak intelligibly. But I thank God that she begins to show evident symptoms of recovery in both respects, and I have now a warm hope to see her restored to me yet once again. Otherwise *actum esset de me.*

It happened providentially that Hayley arrived here about three days before she was taken ill, and both by the tender interest he took in her and by no inconsiderable share of physical skill, alleviated much my distress, and contributed not a little to her speedy amendment. The part he has acted on the occasion has entitled him in short to all the affection and esteem that we can ever show him, and to the respect of all who love us. He spent a little more than a fortnight with us and went yesterday. Him

I have commissioned to manage your business with Lord Thurlow, for he knows him well and breakfasts with him, I believe, this very morning. How he speeds you shall know as soon as I am informed myself. And if it should have happened that he could not see him nor have an opportunity of seeing him before his own return to Earham, I will renew my application by letter. I shall hear from Hayley in a day or two.

It is time now that I should felicitate you on an event so happy to you both as the birth of a son. May he enter life under the influence of propitious stars, but especially with God's blessing upon all his future course! Give them each a kiss for me and another for Mrs. Unwin, and tell Mrs. Rose how sincerely we rejoice in her safe delivery.¹

The day approaches when Johnson's payment is to be made. But before that day comes I shall have occasion for a hundred, and purpose to give him notice by this day's post that I shall draw upon him by your means at the expiration of a week after the date of this letter, for that sum. I know you will be so kind as to receive it for me and remit it to me directly. A thought has struck me on this subject which I am now going to communicate, and of which I shall be glad to have your opinion. In the present state of the funds to purchase stock could be by no means advisable. Johnson's, I suppose, is as good private security as I can have. If, therefore, he will pay me such interest for the money as I might demand from another man, I am willing that it should continue in his hands. This will avoid all

¹ (Note in pencil)—I was born on the 29th of May 1792. Alas! how little avail the warmest good wishes.
W. F. R[ose].

danger of a clash you know where, and will be attended with this convenience beside, that I shall be able to draw as I want it and nothing said. Johnson himself, I should imagine, will have no objection, and it will please me well.

Adieu, my dear friend. I shall tell Johnson to expect you on Saturday the 9th or Monday the 11th.

With our united best compliments to yourself and Mrs. Rose. I remain sincerely yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO MRS. BODHAM

Weston, June 4, 1792.

MY DEAREST ROSE,—I am not such an ungrateful and insensible animal as to have neglected you thus long without a reason.

I cannot say that I am sorry that our dear Johnny finds the pulpit door shut against him at present. He is young, and can afford to wait another year; neither is it to be regretted, that his time of preparation for an office of so much importance as that of a minister of God's word should have been a little protracted. It is easier to direct the movements of a great army, than to guide a few souls to heaven; the way is narrow, and full of snares, and the guide himself has the most difficulties to encounter. But I trust he will do well. He is single in his views, honest-hearted, and desirous, by prayer and study of the Scripture, to qualify himself for the service of his great Master, who will suffer no such man to fail for want of his aid and protection. Adieu.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, June 4, 1792.

ALL'S WELL,—Which words I place as conspicuously as possible, and prefix them to my letter, to save you the pain, my friend and brother, of a moment's anxious speculation. Poor Mary proceeds in her amendment still, and improves, I think, even at a swifter rate than when you left her. The stronger she grows, the faster she gathers strength, which is perhaps the natural course of recovery. She walked so well this morning, that she told me at my first visit she had entirely forgot her illness; and she spoke so distinctly, and had so much of her usual countenance, that, had it been possible, she would have made me forget it too.

Returned from my walk, blown to tatters—found two dear things in the study, your letter, and my Mary! She is bravely well, and your beloved epistle does us both good. I found your kind pencil note in my song-book, as soon as I came down on the morning of your departure; and Mary was vexed to the heart, that the simpletons who watched her supposed her asleep, when she was not; for she learned soon after you were gone, that you would have peeped at her, had you known her to have been awake. I perhaps might have had a peep too, and therefore was as vexed as she; but if it please God, we shall make ourselves large amends for all lost peeps by and by at Earham.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

5th June, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—Mrs. Unwin has had a very indifferent night, and is far from being so well this morning as I hoped she would be; having seen her yesterday much better than on any former day since she was taken ill. I can attain, in short, to no settled hope of her recovery. Every paralytic stroke exposes a person more to the danger of another, and I am in constant fear of a repetition, from which it is evident that, enfeebled as she is, and at her time of life, she could not be restored without an absolute miracle. I cannot but observe, too, that none of your notices go the length we wish; none of them speak plainly of a recovery; they are all open to a spiritual interpretation, and seem almost to demand it. When she had atrophy twenty-seven years ago, I had clear notice of her restoration in these words, *she shall recover*, and in these, *she is yours for many years*. And when she was taken ill last December I had an equally clear to the same purpose in these words, *your watch must be wound up again*. But on the present occasion I have none such. On the contrary, I am continually threatened with the loss of her. My nocturnal experiences are all of the most terrible kind. Death, churchyards, and carcases, or else thunder storms and lightenings, God angry, and myself wishing that I had never been born. Such are my dreams; and when I wake it is only to hear something terrible, of which she is generally the subject.

Who can hope for peace amid such trouble? I cannot. I live a life of terror. My prospects respecting this life as well as another seem all intercepted; I am incapable of proceeding in the work I have begun, and unless it pleases God to give me a quieter mind I shall be obliged to free myself from my engagement, while Johnson has yet time enough before him to employ another. I write thus that you may accommodate your prayers to my condition and circumstances, and not that I may make you more a partaker with me in my distresses than you are already. I should not wish that evil even to an enemy, much less to you.¹—

Yours,
Wm. COWPER.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, June 5, 1792.

YESTERDAY was a noble day with us—speech almost perfect—eyes open almost the whole day, without any effort to keep them so; and the step wonderfully improved. But the night has been almost a sleepless one, owing partly I believe to her having had as much sleep again as usual the night before; for even when she is in tolerable health she hardly ever sleeps well two nights together. I found her accordingly a little out of spirits this morning, but still insisting on it that she is better. Indeed she always tells me so, and will probably die with those very words upon her lips. They will be true then at least, for then she will be best of all. She is now (the clock has just struck eleven)

¹ 1792, June 5.—I writ to-day to the Esqr. But before he recd. it he wrote me a long and sorrowful letter in deep distress, thinking to give up his work, Madm. being relapsed.—*Teedon's Diary.*

endeavouring, I believe, to get a little sleep, for which reason I do not yet let her know that I have received your letter.

Can I ever honour you enough for your zeal to serve me? Truly I think not: I am however so sensible of the love I owe you on this account, that I every day regret the acuteness of your feelings for me, convinced that they expose you to much trouble, mortification, and disappointment. I have in short a poor opinion of my destiny, as I told you when you were here; and though I believe that if any man living can do me good, you will, I cannot yet persuade myself that even you will be successful in attempting it. But it is no matter; you are yourself a good which I can never value enough, and whether rich or poor in other respects, I shall always account myself better provided for than I deserve, with such a friend at my back as you. Let it please God to continue to me my William and Mary, and I will be more reasonable than to grumble.

I rose this morning wrapped round with a cloud of melancholy, and with a heart full of fears; but if I see Mary's amendment a little advanced when she rises, I shall be better.

I have just been with her again. Except that she is fatigued for want of sleep, she seems as well as yesterday. The post brings me a letter from Hurdis, who is broken-hearted for a dying sister.¹ Had we eyes sharp enough, we should see the arrows of Death flying in all directions, and account it a wonder that we and our friends escape them a single day.

W. C.

¹ Sally Hurdis. See Letter of 26th Aug. 1792.

TO LADY HESKETH

The Lodge, June 6, 1792.

MY DEAREST COZ,—IF Hayley be with you when this arrives, or if he has breakfasted with you and is gone, he will have related to you what I told him in my last concerning Mrs. Unwin,—that she had passed but an indifferent night, and was rather languid for want of sleep. I was obliged to seal that letter and send it, before she was brought down stairs, but on my return from walking I found her in the study. Notwithstanding her almost sleepless night, she was evidently a little better, could walk with less support, and could articulate rather more distinctly. At night she walked from the stairhead through my chamber to her own, leaning only on one arm, and stepping rather less like an infant.

Her last night has not been much better than the former, for she has had no sleep since three this morning, which debilitates her sadly, and at her first rising occasions such contractions of the muscles on the right side as would tempt one to think her worse. But these appearances in a measure vanish as the day goes on. She is now just arrived in the study, and has alarmed me a little, by neither looking nor speaking so well as she did in the evening. Yet she walked from the door to her chair better than ever. For the future, I shall make my reports less frequent, for the difference between day and day is so slight, that I shall otherwise seem always to give the same account of her.

Should Hayley be with you, tell him I have given my friend Mr. Rose an introductory letter to him. He wished much for the happiness of knowing him,

and though he will hardly be able to catch him if he leaves town on Friday, as I know he intends, I was desirous that the disappointment should not be owing to me.

I knew that you would fall in love with Hayley. Every body here has done so, and wherever he goes, every body must. The Chancellor, I am willing to hope, will not be the only insensible;—but I am less sanguine in my expectations of his success in that, and indeed in every other quarter where my interest is concerned, than either he or you. Depend on it, my dear, I was born to be poor, and although Hayley would enrich me if any mortal could, having such zeal and such talents as usually carry all before them, my destiny, I fear, will prove too hard for him. Adieu, my dear, with our poor patient's best love, I remain ever yours,

Wm. COWPER.

The jaunt to Stowe¹ was made by Sam² and his wife for the sake of a visit to an uncle from whom they have expectations. Hannah³ went with them, and the uncle accompanied them through the gardens. But all this came to pass many days before Mrs. Unwin was taken ill.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

6 June, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—It was not possible for me to write by the return of the post, which I would gladly have done, being apprehensive that my intro-

¹ Stowe House, near Buckingham.

² Sam Roberts, Cowper's man.

³ Cowper's protégée.

ductory line may arrive too late. Hayley, I know, intends to leave London on Friday if nothing happens to prevent him. It is possible, however, that something may, and therefore I send it. He will be found, if you find him at all, at Romney's¹ the Painter, Cavendish Square.

I thank you for your expeditious performance of my commission to Johnson, and as soon as we can get the money from our neighbour Mr. Andrews of Olney, or from any other, I shall draw for it. That will probably be in a few days. When you go Johnson's way I will beg you to tell him that ere long I shall draw for another hundred and then leave the remaining eight undisturbed in his hands as long as may be. It happens now and then in the course of many years that certain articles of family use require to be renewed, and such are times of extraordinary expenditure.

Mrs. Unwin, I thank God for it, continues to recover strength; she can now move from one room to another with very little support, and her speech is greatly mended. The principal means of her recovery has been the daily use of the electrical machine, by which I can always see her to be immediately benefited. I have other letters to write by this post and must therefore be as short as you. Farewell. With many thanks for all your services, and with our united love and congratulations, I remain, sincerely yours,

W.M. COWPER.

¹ George Romney (1734-1802), born at Beckside near Dalton-in-Furness, Lancashire. In 1758 he married Mary Abbot of Kirkland, and in 1762 left her and went up to London. After a brilliant career of thirty-five years (he and Reynolds divided the Town), he went home to his wife, who nursed him till his death.

Shall rejoice to see Johnny of Norfolk with all my heart, and am glad that he called upon you.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, June 7, 1792.

I BEGAN your fine poem on History this morning, and already perceive that I am reading for my humiliation. To tell you the truth, I am become very little in my own eyes.

Of what materials can you suppose me made, if after all the rapid proofs that you have given me of your friendship, I do not love you with all my heart, and regret your absence continually ? But you must permit me nevertheless to be melancholy now and then ; or if you will not, I must be so without your permission ; for that sable thread is so intermixed with the very thread of my existence, as to be inseparable from it, at least while I exist in the body. Be content therefore ; let me sigh and groan, but always be sure that I love you ! You will be well assured that I should not have indulged myself in this rhapsody about myself and my melancholy, had my present mood been of that complexion, or had not our poor Mary seemed still to advance in her recovery. So in fact she does, and has performed several little feats to-day ; such as either she could not perform at all, or very feebly, while you were with us.

I shall be glad if you have seen Johnny as I call him, my Norfolk cousin ; he is a sweet lad, but as shy as a bird. It costs him always two or three days to open his mouth before a stranger ; but when he does, he is sure to please by the innocent cheer-

fulness of his conversation. His sister too is one of my idols, for the resemblance she bears to my mother.

Mary and you have all my thoughts; and how should it be otherwise? She looks well, is better, and loves you dearly. Adieu! my brother.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

Weston, June 7, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I shall not have opportunity to say much, but lest I should seem slow to acknowledge your last very kind letter, I will say the little that I can.

In the first place I thank you for your most cordial invitation of Mrs. Unwin and myself to Blithfield; but alas! were there no other impediment, such a one has occurred as of itself makes all journeying at this time, and for some time to come, impracticable. Mrs. Unwin has been seized since I received your letter with a disorder that for several days deprived her entirely of the use of her right side, and made her speech so indistinct, as to be almost unintelligible. She is at present somewhat recovered, and daily I hope regains a little strength; but is still so feeble that I have no hope of her complete restoration even to the small share of health she enjoyed before, in less than many weeks; perhaps if I say months, I shall not exceed the occasion. Her illness is a repetition of one with which she was attacked in last December, and she still felt in a degree the effects of the first, when the second affliction found her. As to myself I have suffered nearly the same disability in mind on the

occasion, as she in body. All power to study, all thoughts both of Homer and Milton are driven to a distance, and I can do nothing at present but watch my poor patient, and administer to her, as I do every day, the electrical operation. It seems to be of use in the moment; and she can always articulate better for a time after it is over. But this perceptible benefit is not of very long duration; yet it is reasonable to hope that a remedy in appearance of so much present efficacy may at length, and by frequent repetition, have effects more lasting.

I am truly concerned for your loss of the good Aspasio; but if he were old enough to have been my father, his eleventh hour at least was come, and it was high time that he should be summoned to receive his wages. For you I am concerned, not for him, whose removal to far happier scenes is no subject for lamentation. But as to ourselves, while we are continued here, we cannot but be sensible that the loss of a pious and rational friend makes a void not easily filled.

I am not sufficiently acquainted with the cypress to be sure of the propriety of the epithet wide-spread. Your objection, I dare say, is well founded, and I will either find a better adjunct, or new model the sentence.—Adieu, my dear friend; with the poor invalid's best compliments, I remain sincerely yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Friday, 8 June, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I am not in good spirits, and perhaps see objects darker than they are through the medium of my own melancholy, but I get no comfort from

the words you sent me yesterday, which comfort you so much. On the contrary, they filled me with alarm and terror the moment I saw them.

The mount in which God will appear is, I know by experience, a terrible mount. I have been more than once upon that mount, and dread the thought of it. I am not there now; the present is indeed a time of distress, but rather a valley than the mount in question.

Mrs. Unwin mends, but she mends slowly, and not half fast enough for my wishes. She begs to be remembered to you.—I am, yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, June 10, 1792.

Our patient goes on rarely.

MY DEAR HAYLEY, AND SUCH MOST DESERVEDLY,—I received your Huzza with great pleasure, and am happy that you at last found your way into the presence of my great friend¹ and yours. But happy chiefly because I know what would have been your bitter mortification on my account if you had not; for I have still a most obstinate and provoking backwardness to hope well of my own fortunes, notwithstanding the warm impressions which your zeal accompanied with your manners, and both exerted in my behalf, must necessarily have made upon him. It is my happiness however to have no anxious thoughts about your success, except for your sake. I do indeed anxiously wish that every

¹ Lord Thurlow.

thing you do may prosper, and should I at last prosper by your means shall taste double sweetness in prosperity for that reason.

I rose this morning, as I usually do, with a mind all in sables, having been whispered into the deepest melancholy by my nocturnal monitor. My evil one I mean, for as I told you I have two, and the good one was silent, as he generally is. In this mood I presented myself at Mary's bedside, whom I found, though after many hours, lying awake, yet cheerful, and not to be infected with my desponding humour. It is a great blessing to us both that, poor feeble thing as she is, she has a most invincible courage and a trust in God's goodness that nothing shakes. She is now in the study, and is certainly in some little degree better than she was yesterday, but how to measure that little I know not except by saying that it is just perceptible. Could she sleep more, her amendment would be more discernible. You are always dear to her, and so she bids me tell you.

I am glad that you saw—but I forget—I have still more to say about Mary. She has constantly used the embrocation since we received it, night and morning, and always feels a glow after it, and the electuary answers better than any thing of the kind she has taken. We continue our sparkling operations, and never without good effect, and the result of all is, that though, as I have said, the difference between day and day is small, she is on the whole so much improved that she now and then takes a turn in the study supported by me only, and even with very little help of mine. But still she rides to bed, and rides down again between Samuel and Molly.

I am glad that you have seen my Johnny of

Norfolk, because I know it will be a comfort to you to have seen your successor. He arrived, to my great joy, yesterday ; and not having bound himself to any particular time of going, will, I hope, stay long with us. You are now once more snug in your retreat, and I give you joy of your return to it, after the bustle in which you have lived since you left Weston. Weston mourns your absence, and will mourn it till she sees you again. What is to become of Milton I know not ; I do nothing but scribble to you, and seem to have no relish for any other employment. I have however, in pursuit of your idea to compliment Darwin,¹ put a few stanzas together, which I shall subjoin ; you will easily give them all that you find they want, and match the song with another.

TO DOCTOR DARWIN²

Two poets³ (poets by report
 Not oft so well agree),
 Sweet Harmonist of Flora's Court,
 Conspire to honour thee.

They best can judge a poet's worth
 Who oft themselves have known
 The pangs of a poetic birth
 By bringing forth their own.

The verse that kindles meets a fire,
 A kindred fire in them,
 The numbers live that they admire,
 And die, that they condemn.

¹ Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), a physician, and the grandfather of the great naturalist, was a poet of considerable acceptance in his day. He wrote *The Botanic Garden* and *The Lives of the Plants*, besides two prose works *Zoonomia* and *Phytologia*.

² For the ultimate form this poem took, see Globe Ed. p. 386.

³ Hayley and Cowper.

Live thou—well pleas'd alike, thy song
 With that award we greet,
 Rich in embellishment as strong,
 And learn'd as it is sweet.

No envy mingles with our praise,
 Though could our hearts repine
 At any poet's happier lays—
 At whose so soon as thine?

But we in mutual bondage knit
 Of friendship's closest tie,
 Can gaze on even Darwin's wit
 With an unjaundiced eye;

And deem the bard, whoe'er he be,
 And howsoever known,
 Who would not twine a wreath for thee
 Scarce worthy of his own.¹

Rose was greatly mortified that he missed you both at your house and at his own. A thousand thanks for the favour you have obtained for him.

I have received at last a letter of thanks from Tom Clio, to whom Johnson gave my Homer five months ago. He is a violent overturner of thrones and kingdoms, and foolishly thinks to recommend himself to me by telling me that he is so. He adds likewise that Mr. Paine often dines with him. Will it not be best to leave his letter unanswered?

I have this moment one of the kindest letters that ever was from Carwardine. I will give you the contents in shorthand in my next.

My love to yr. dear boy;² hope you found him well.

¹ Dr. Darwin writing to the Rev. R. Polwhele, 17th July 1792, says: 'I shall take the liberty of prefixing your elegant lines to the next edition of my work, along with others I have received from Mr. Hayley and Mr. Cowper.'

² Thomas Alphonso Hayley, natural son of Hayley.

I am now going to my walk with Johnny—much cheered since I began, by writing to you, by reading Carwardine, and by Mary's looks and good spirits.
—*Adieu, mi charissime!*

W.M. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Saturday Morning.

DEAR SIR,—It is not always possible for me to write in the instant, and yesterday it was for your sake that I declined it. I could have said nothing that would not have augmented your distress, having myself received no alleviation of mine. If I am somewhat better to-day, it is not because I have been favoured with any positive comfort, but because these two last nights, I have slept better, which I ascribe in part to a few drops of laudanum taken each night. But neither of these nights has been passed without some threatenings of that which I fear more than any other thing, the loss of my faithful, long tried, and only intimate. From whom they come I know not, nor is the time precisely mentioned; but it is always spoken of as near approaching.

Mrs. Unwin has slept her usual time, about five hours, and is this morning as well as usual. As for me, I waked with this line from Comus:

‘The wonted roar is up amid the woods’;
consequently I expect to hear it soon.—I am, dear Sir, yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH

Weston, June 11, 1792.

MY DEAREST Coz, — Thou art ever in my thoughts whether I am writing to thee or not; and

my correspondence seems to grow upon me at such a rate, that I am not able to address thee so often as I would. In fact, I live only to write letters. Hayley is as you see added to the number, and to him I write almost as duly as I rise in the morning; nor is he only added, but his friend Carwardine also—Carwardine the generous, the disinterested, the friendly. I seem in short to have stumbled suddenly on a race of heroes, men who resolve to have no interests of their own, till mine are served.

But I will proceed to other matters, that concern me more intimately, and more immediately, than all that can be done for me either by the great, or the small, or by both united. Since I wrote last, Mrs. Unwin has been continually improving in strength, but at so gradual a rate that I can only mark it by saying that she moves about every day with less support than the former. Her recovery is most of all retarded by want of sleep. On the whole I believe she goes on as well as could be expected, though not quite well enough to satisfy me. And Dr. Austin,¹ speaking from the reports I have made of her, says he has no doubt of her restoration.

During the last two months I seem to myself to have been in a dream. It has been a most eventful period, and fruitful to an uncommon degree, both in good and evil. I have been very ill, and suffered excruciating pain. I recovered, and became quite well again. I received within my doors a man, but lately an entire stranger, and who now loves me as his brother, and forgets himself to serve me. Mrs.

¹ Friend of Hayley's. He gave gratuitous assistance to Mrs. Unwin. Died 1793. See Globe Edition, p. 384, for the lines 'To Dr. Austin.'

Unwin has been seized with an illness that for many days threatened to deprive me of her, and to cast a gloom, an impenetrable one, on all my future prospects. She is now granted to me again. A few days since, I should have thought the moon might have descended into my purse as likely as any emolument, and now it seems not impossible. All this has come to pass with such rapidity as events move with in romance indeed, but not often in real life. Events of all sorts creep or fly exactly as God pleases.

To the foregoing I have to add in conclusion the arrival of my Johnny, just when I wanted him most, and when only a few days before I had no expectation of him. He came to dinner on Saturday, and I hope I shall keep him long. What comes next I know not, but shall endeavour, as you exhort me, to look for good, and I know I shall have your prayers that I may not be disappointed.

Hayley tells me you begin to be jealous of him, lest I should love him more than I love you, and bids me say, ‘that should I do so, you in revenge must love him more than I do.’—Him I know you will love, and me, because you have such a habit of doing it that you cannot help it.

Adieu! My knuckles ache with letter writing. With my poor patient’s affectionate remembrances, and Johnny’s, I am ever thine,

W. C.

TO THE REV. THOMAS CARWARDINE, EARL'S COLN
PRIORY, NEAR HALSTEAD, ESSEX

Weston Underwood, June 11, 1792.

MY DEAR CARWARDINE,—Sooner or later I must address you in that style, since it is impossible that

I should love Hayley as I do and not be familiar with his dearest friend ; for which reason I may as well begin now. I thank you for your most friendly letter, and for all your most friendly doings in favour of a poor solitary poet, who, till within these few days, had no hopes of service from any body, except of such services as he has received from his own kindred, to whom he has been a burthen many years. But I owe them the justice to add that their kindness has not suffered them to think so.

My affairs have been in the best train possible since my dear brother bard and you have taken them in hand. He left London on Saturday, on which day I received a short note from him, dated the day before, beginning thus,—‘ Huzza ! I have passed an agreeable hour from eight to nine this morning with the Chancellor. Left both him and Lord Kenyon, who was with us, so impressed with warm wishes to serve you, that I am persuaded your old friend Thurlow will accomplish it if possible.’

Thus stands the affair at present. My volumes, your noble gift to Miss Thurlow (noble I mean in respect of the intention of the giver), seem to have procured him this interview; for his first note, requesting an appointment to breakfast, remained unanswered so long that it seemed to be forgotten ; but your present, which he found at Romney’s, furnished him with a fair occasion for writing a second, and that second burst the barricado. If I succeed therefore, I owe my fortunes to William of Earham and his friend of Coln,¹ and if I do not

¹ Earl’s Coln Priory, Halstead, Essex, residence of the Rev. Thomas Carwardine.

succeed, shall always account myself as much indebted to them both as if I had. What dæmon could whisper in the Chancellor's ear that I am rich, I neither can guess nor wish to do it, but he was doubtless some dæmon who wished to starve me. Perhaps he will be disappointed, as all such dæmons should be.

I know well the Chancellor's benevolence of heart, and how much he is misunderstood by the world. When he was young he would do the kindest things, and at an expense to himself which at that time he could ill afford, and he would do them too in the most secret manner. I know not what is become of her now, but in those days there was a certain Miss Christian, the daughter, if I mistake not, of a Norfolk clergyman, who had been a friend of Thurlow's father. The girl was left penniless, and he established her in Tavistock Street as a milliner, disbursing three hundred pounds to furnish a shop for her. I went with him to the house, and having seen her, am ready to swear that his motives were not, nor could be, of the amorous kind, for she was ugly to a wonder. No creature I believe knew anything of this *truly Christian* intrigue but myself only. When I think on these things, and hear them spoken of as I sometimes do

. . . *vae ! meum*
Fervens difficili bile tumet jecur.

Many a time I have fought his battles, and some I have convinced of their error.

In answer to your benevolent enquiries concerning my poor Mary, I have to tell you that her recovery proceeds *pedetentim tamen*, slowly, but as

fast I suppose as, all things considered, I have any reason to expect. She now walks with very little support from one room to another, and articulates pretty intelligibly. She is this moment brought down into the study, and, understanding that I am writing to you, says, a thousand thanks for me to Mr. Carwardine. Should we be so happy as to be able to emigrate in the autumn, you may depend on knowing when and by what route. In the mean time tell us by which we can approach you nearest.

Adieu—may God bless you and yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO MRS. KING

Weston Underwood, June 12, 1792.

MY DEAR MADAM,—I should be ashamed to compare the date of your letter with the date of mine, had I not again too good an excuse for my long silence. I have been ill myself; and, for some weeks, on account of a most painful disorder, was incapable both of reading and holding a pen. But this is over, and I am well again.

An illness that has distressed me much more, and hindered me equally, has been one of the same kind which seized Mrs. Unwin last winter, only more severe, and consequently more alarming, and which seized her again about three weeks since, depriving her both of speech and of the use of her right side entirely. I was taking a morning walk with my friend and brother poet Hayley, at that time here on a visit, and at our return we found Mrs. Unwin, whom we had left about an hour, seized and disabled as I have said. By the use of the electrical machine,

and other aids, she is, I thank God, so far restored as to be able to speak articulately, especially in a morning, and to move from one room to another with very little support; but it will be long, I fear, before she will be restored to the little health and strength she had, for she never overcame, entirely, the effects of the first attack.

My situation would have been melancholy indeed, had not Mr. Hayley providentially arrived about a week before we were visited with this affliction. It is impossible to convey to you in words an adequate idea of the affectionate interest he took in my distress, and of the tenderness of his attentions to our poor patient. He has some skill in medicine too, which, at our great distance from a physician, made him particularly useful. Last Friday se'nnight he was obliged to leave me, and since his departure I have the comfort of a young relation's company from Norfolk, a cousin of mine named Johnson, whom I remember to have mentioned to you in a former letter. Here, therefore, I may set up one more Ebenezer, and say, Thus far the Lord hath helped me. I have not been left alone under my burden, but have had a little friendly society for my support, and feel my spirits now considerably relieved by symptoms of Mrs. Unwin's daily amendment.

It will give us great pleasure to hear that, since the summer has once more peeped at us, your painful complaint the rheumatism is abated. Mrs. Unwin bids me present to you her best compliments, and to Mr. King, to which I add my own, and remain, dear Madam, your affectionate friend and most humble servant,

W.M. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

[*Probably June 1792.*]

DEAR SIR,—I have a short moment to thank you for your prayers, and to tell you that they are so far answered as that she continues to recover strength. Continue you to pray for us both, and believe me yours,

Wm. COWPER.

A present of two volumes of verse from the Rev. Richard Polwhele, caused Cowper to write as follows:—

TO THE REV. RICHARD POLWHELE

Weston Underwood, June 15, 1792.

REV. SIR,—You will not, I hope, judge the sense that I entertain of my obligation to you by the tardiness of my acknowledgment. That it reaches you so late is no fault of mine, for I received your most acceptable present, the two volumes of poetry by gentlemen of Devonshire and Cornwall, no longer since than yesterday evening. You do me great honour, Sir, in some beautiful lines written by yourself on a blank leaf of the publication, of which, were any other poet than myself the subject of them, I should be proud to have been the author. The chief glory of any poet is to have pleased those whose writings please others, and on this account you may be sure that I shall always set the highest value on the compliment paid me by you.—I am Sir, with much respect, your obliged and obedient humble servant,

Wm. COWPER.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

June 19, 1792.

I AM as rich at this moment, as I ever was since I was born, and having no good reason to suppose that I shall yet live another sixty years to an end, have no need to care whether I add to my present stock or not. We will talk more about an Anglo-Grecian Homer when the time comes. My bookseller says it will be bought only by idle folks who are at a loss to know what to do with their money.

Thus I have filled a whole page to my dear William of Eartham, and have not said a syllable yet about my Mary. A sure sign that she goes well. Be it known to you that we have these four days discarded our sedan with two elbows. Here is no more carrying, or being carried, but she walks upstairs boldly, with one hand upon the balustrade, and the other under my arm, and in like manner she comes down in a morning. Still I confess she is feeble, and misses much of her former strength. The weather too is sadly against her: it deprives her of many a good turn in the orchard, and fifty times have I wished this very day, that Dr. Darwin's scheme of giving rudders and sails to the Ice Islands, that spoil all our summers, were actually put into practice. So should we have gentle airs instead of churlish blasts, and those everlasting sources of bad weather being once navigated into the Southern hemisphere, my Mary would recover as fast again. We are both of your mind respecting the journey to Eartham, and think that July, if by that time she have strength for the journey, will be

better than August. We shall have more long days before us, and then we shall want as much for our return as for our going forth. This, however, must be left to the Giver of all Good. If our visit to you be according to His will, He will smooth our way before us, and appoint the time of it, and I thus speak, not because I wish to seem a saint in your eyes, but because my poor Mary actually is one, and would not set her foot over the threshold, unless she had, or thought she had, God's permission. With that she would go through floods and fire, though without it she would be afraid of everything—afraid even to visit you, dearly as she loves, and much as she longs to see you. W. C.

TO LADY THROCKMORTON

The Lodge, June 22nd, 1792.

MY DEAREST LADY FROG,—I pardon everything to you, and especially to you kneeling so gracefully at the head of your letter. A letter which gave me tenfold pleasure, because instead of being able to write I considered you quite an invalid. How is this, and what is the report that I heard with horror no longer since than the day before yesterday? That you had been overturned going to Ranelagh, your carriage broken to pieces and yourself most miserably cut and bruised. Is it possible that authentic as this said intelligence seemed to be (for it came from Archer¹) it could yet be false? or is it possible that it can be true, and in your whole letter not one word about it? If the newspapers lie not, you have been robbed

¹ A Weston Underwood farmer.

also, have lost your plate and your clothes by housebreakers, and no longer ago than last Tuesday; concerning this too you are silent. But you write in good spirits, which raises mine, convincing me that if you have received any hurt, yet not so much as has been reported, and as to the robbery I know that will not trouble you. So I give myself joy most heartily, and lay aside all my cares and fears about you. The news that you have heard concerning Mrs. Unwin is not disputable. She has indeed been extremely ill, and about three weeks since I feared that I should have lost her by a stroke as threatening as it was sudden. But I thank God she is much restored, so much that I have reason to hope her recovery will be complete before the summer is over. She remembers you always with affection, often talks about you, and bids me present her best compliments. I am very happy in the approaching union of George and Catharina. Give my love to them both, and tell them that the expectation of this event has worn me quite away, and that if it be delayed even but a little longer, they will find me when they come the shadow only of what I was, such is and long has been my impatience.

Adieu, my dear Lady Frog, give my best love to the parties in question, and to your own S^r John,

I am going to the orchard walk with Mrs. Unwin, so will only beg you to let me hear from you as soon as you can on your travels, and to believe me ever most truly yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston Underwood, 23 June, 1792.

Now for criticism, my dearest brother! and first for yours on me. My copy is much improved by the omission you advise, but I thought the word *floral* anticipated in the first stanza, viz.: by the words *sweet Harmonist of Flora's Court*. I have, therefore, altered the passage as you see. I have also cured the ellipsis in the fourth stanza, as you will likewise see. But the word *wit* I could not displace for lack of a rhyme to *muse* and to every other word I attempted to substitute. The *wit* I mean is wit in the larger sense, in short what the Latins intend by *ingenium*; and if the doctor will be so good as thus to understand it, he will do me a favour, and I shall be obliged to him. *Unworthy* I have also adopted instead of *scarce worthy*, and the more readily you may be sure because I had it so at first. Second thoughts, therefore, are not always best.

Now for yours, but to proceed regularly, and as a critic should, I will first give you your copy altered and then my reasons for the alteration.

As Nature lovely Science led
Thro' all her flowery maze,
The volume she before her spread
Of Darwin's radiant lays.

Coy Science starts—so started Eve
At beauties yet unknown;
The figure that you there perceive,
Said Nature, is your own.

My own? It is—but half so fair
I never seemed till now;
And here, too, with a softened air,
Sweet Nature! here art thou.

Yes, in this mirror of the bard
We both embellished shine,
And, grateful, will unite to guard
An artist so divine.

Thus Nature and thus Science spake
In Flora's friendly bower,
While Darwin's glory seemed to wake
New life in every flower.

Two social bards who roamed that way
Learned all, and all they learned
Were charged by Nature to convey
To whom it most concerned.

In the first speech of the dialogue I have named the speaker, because I remember that when I read it first I was not immediately aware who speaks; it is plain enough, I grant, by inference, but inference is ratiocination, and that costs a moment or two, which is more than can be afforded. The speaker being thus ascertained at once, in the first instance, in the two others seems sufficiently obvious, therefore those I leave as I find them, except the third line of the third speech which I have altered so as to get rid of the repeated *we* which was not wanted, and of the word *jointly* which did not please me. As to my substituted last stanza, that I leave entirely to your discretion, having my doubts about the propriety of superseding yours, because at the first reading I liked it well, but afterwards contrived to quarrel with the word *gaily*. I would have

given something that your name had been Hadley, for then *gladly* would have been the rhyme, and I should have had no scruples about it. As to the whole I account your thought an excellent one, and your versification equal to it; therefore, let us set off directly and tickle the Dr. together. I forgot to observe on the words—my own it is—that I have broken them into an interrogation and answer for smartness' sake, and now I will let you go.

I shall take your advice concerning the wooden point, and indeed have begun to take it, that silent operation never satisfied me. I wanted a little noise to convince me that some good was done, and shall therefore proceed to sparkle in future as we were used to do. My Mary gets better daily, and could now, I believe, make shift to climb stairs alone if I would suffer it, but I dare not trust her quite so far, though she grumbles at my caution, and grows continually more and more ambitious of independence. Just now she quitted her chair unperceived by me, and I saw her standing up at a distance from it with one hand on the table. Her purpose was to have travelled round the room alone, and much she was mortified because I insisted upon travelling round the room with her. This is all good news, yet I am often melancholy about her, full of apprehensions and impatience and wishes for a more rapid recovery. We have both of us left off all narcotics. She sleeps without her paregoric, and I without laudanum. A little more sunshine would be a great comfort and restorative to us both. Darwin proposes a scheme to get rain

when we want it by means of electrical points, but I will write another poem in his praise if he will tell us how to obtain dry weather, for as to rain we have it almost to drowning.

The Chancellor is seen in all the print shops naked and in the attitude of the Medicean Venus. It is a droll thought, but can you tell me on what it is founded? I cannot.

My Mary and I are reduced to our two selves, Johnny being gone to town, but only for a few days. I trust to you to thank our good Doctor Austin, and to tell him now and then how we go on. The swelled ankle is now reduced to its natural size, but still she complains of numbness and tinglings in her finger ends. I shall be happy when she can knit again, for she sits, poor thing, unoccupied all the day and complains of it. If my presence is necessary to complete your cure, I would to heaven that we were at this moment with you, for yours, I know, would do me equal good. I rejoice at your niceness in the affairs of the young Diville, and remain, my dear brother,

Wm. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Friday Morning [probably June 1792].

DEAR SIR,—Mrs. Unwin is much better in all respects, except that her utterance continues to be extremely imperfect. We carried her yesterday and the day before into the orchard walk, where the air and the little exercise she could take were very beneficial to her.

But as for me, I live under perpetual appre-

hensions of her relapse, and the palsy of my own soul remains as it was.—Yours,

Wm. Cowper.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, June 27, 1792.

WELL then—let us talk about this journey to Eartham. You wish me to settle the time of it, and I wish with all my heart to be able to do so, living in hopes meanwhile that I shall be able to do it soon. But some little time must necessarily intervene. Our Mary must be able to walk alone, to cut her own food, feed herself, and to wear her own shoes, for at present she wears mine. All things considered, my friend and brother, you will see the expediency of waiting a little before we set off to Eartham. We mean indeed before that day arrives to make a trial of the strength of her head, how far it may be able to bear the motion of a carriage, a motion that it has not felt these seven years. I grieve that we are thus circumstanced, and that we cannot gratify ourselves in a delightful and innocent project without all these precautions, but when we have leaf-gold to handle, we must do it tenderly.

I thank you, my brother, both for presenting my authorship to your friend Guy, and for the excellent verses with which you have inscribed your present. There are none neater or better turned. With what shall I requite you? I have nothing to send you but a gimcrack, which I have prepared for my bride and bridegroom neighbours, who are expected to-morrow! You saw in my

book a poem entitled ‘Catharina,’ which concluded with a wish that we had her for a neighbour: this therefore is called

CATHARINA

(*The Second Part*)

ON HER MARRIAGE TO GEORGE COURtenay, Esq.

Believe it or not as you choose, etc.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

Weston, June 28, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am happy in being able to send you a favourable account of my poor patient. Her recovery, though very gradual, is still evident, and some perceptible amendment is made every day. Had the season been less wintry she would probably have mended faster; for during many days in the course of this gloomy June, she has been confined by the weather. She walked yesterday, however, supported by me and the servant, two and forty times the length of our gravel walk in the orchard; no bad performance for a person who, a month since dragged her foot after her, and could not set the sole to the ground. Her speech too is improved, but not in the same proportion, and at present her right hand is but little serviceable. We continue our electrical operations daily, and have encouragement enough, as you perceive, to do so. To these in fact, more than to any other remedy, I have reason to ascribe her restoration thus far, and with God’s blessing hope that they will be the means of completing it.

As to myself, I have the same share of health as

usual, but cannot boast of very cheerful spirits. Mrs. Unwin's recovery however is a cordial, which, though not unmixed with fearful apprehensions, enables me to go on tolerably. If I see her as well as she was before this last attack, I shall be as cheerful: till then, I must have fears and anxieties.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Monday Morning [probably June 1792].

DEAR SIR,—The answer of your prayers for Mrs. Unwin's recovery seems now perceptible every day. She walks with less assistance, and is no longer carried either upstairs or down. The speech however still remains very imperfect, yet perhaps somewhat mended within these few days. She took the air in the walk four times yesterday.—Yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, 4 July 1792.

The Chancellor once was a tree full of fruit,
A tree in the summer and fanned by the south,
He was great at the top and moist at the root,
And the good things he bore would drop into your mouth.

But since that his Lordship has quitted his place
*Steriles numerandus est arbores inter;*¹
And now to solicit his favours and grace
Is searching your boughs for plums in the winter.

But these are only my jocular sentiments, for in reality I think with you, my dear indefatigable friend, that though his Lordship, unofficed as he is, may have little to give, he may have much within the reach of his influence, and I am certain

¹ He is to be numbered among the barren trees.

if that influence be not exerted in my favour, it will not be because I have not the warmest advocate in the world to actuate it.

I know not how you proceed in your life of Milton, but I suppose not very rapidly, for while you were here, and since you left us, you have had no other theme but me. As for myself, except my letters to you, and the nuptial song I inserted in my last, I have literally done nothing since I saw you. Nothing I mean in the writing way, though a great deal in another; that is to say, in attending my poor Mary, and endeavouring to nurse her up for a journey to Earham. In this I have hitherto succeeded tolerably well, and had rather carry this point completely, than be the most famous editor of Milton that the world has ever seen, or shall see.

Your humorous descant upon my art of wishing made us merry, and consequently did good to us both. There is much wit in it, and could we produce between us a volume of scribblements as sprightly and smart as that, we should be rich in a hurry. I sent my wish¹ to the Hall yesterday and nearly in the form that you recommended. The fifth stanza, to which I knew you would object because I disliked it myself, I expunged, and substituted one in its stead, partly of your own matter and partly of other matter of my own—namely this :

Maria would leave us, I knew,
To the grief and regret of us all,
Yet less to our grief, might we view
Catharina the Queen of the Hall.

This led me to wish as I did, etc.

¹ See Globe Edition, p. 386. *Catharina, the Second Part: On her Marriage to George Courtenay, Esq.*

The second stanza remains as it was, because Mary observed, the poor husband would otherwise be quite out of the question. They are excellent neighbours, and so friendly to me that I wished to gratify them. When I went to pay my first visit, George flew into the court to meet me, and when I entered the parlour Catharina sprang into my arms.

What a wonder it will be should I continue poor much longer. Here is my Johnny as industrious as a bee, writing letters every day and all day long, and sending them round the world with a zeal to do me service. What service I know not, nor shall know, it seems, till Sunday or Monday next, nor should I have known that I am the subject of them had not so much of the secret escaped Lady Hesketh.

I return you many thanks for the letter you sent to the Chancellor, and for giving me a copy of it. With the poetical parts of it he must be pleased because he has good taste, and with the prose because it is exactly suited to his honest and manly character. Having no longer any excuse for silence, I suppose he will give you an answer, and that answer can hardly fail to teach us once for all what we have to expect from him.

What a mysterious creature you are! Since you have known me you say the delightful hope that you have conceived of being instrumental to my peace and comfort is a source of comfort to yourself and of inexpressible gratification, and at the same time explains to you many wonderful things in your own destiny which you could never comprehend till now. I love you for all this in my heart, but the latter part I understand not a word of, but, with all my soul, rejoice if by any means I may be of use to

you, either by alleviating the sorrows or solving the enigmas of your lot.

I write in a fidgeting hurry of spirits and seem to have connected no two ideas. This has been owing to the fear of being hindered every minute by Mr. Newton, who is to be with us to-day, and I know not at what hour. Mary continues to mend but still walks between two. She loves my Hayley and I hers.—Adieu,

W.M. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, LONDON

Weston Underwood, July 8, 1792.

*Truditur dies die,
Novæque pergunt interire luncæ.*

DEAR SIR,—Days, weeks, and months escape me, and nothing is done, nor is it possible for me to do any thing that demands study and attention in the present state of our family. I am the electrician; I am the escort into the garden; I am wanted, in short, on a hundred little occasions that occur every day in Mrs. Unwin's present state of infirmity; and I see no probability that I shall be less occupied in the same indispensable duties for a long time to come. The time fixed in your proposals for publication meanwhile steals on; and I have lately felt my engagement for Milton bear upon my spirits with a pressure which, added to the pressure of some other private concerns, is almost more than they are equal to. Tell me if you expect to be punctual to your assignation with the public, and that the artists will be ready with their part of the business so soon as the spring of 94? I cannot bear to be waited for,

neither shall I be able to perform my part of the work with any success if I am hunted; and I ask this question thus early lest my own distress should increase, and should ultimately prove a distress to you. My translations are finished, and when I have finished also the revisal of them, will be, I believe, tolerably well executed. They shall be heartily at your service, if by this unhappy interception my time should be so shortened as to forbid my doing more.

Your speedy answer will oblige yours affectionately,
Wm. COWPER.

There is one Richard Coleman¹ in the world, whom I have educated from an infant, and who is utterly good for nothing; but he is at present in great trouble, the fruit of his own folly. I send him, by this post, an order upon you for eight guineas.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Wednesday, 11 July 1792.

DEAR SIR,—The words you sent me yesterday afforded considerable relief to my mind, oppressed as it has been for many weeks with uneasy apprehensions concerning my engagement for Milton, lest Mrs. Unwin's state of infirmity continuing I should be too much interrupted to be able to proceed with it. This morning I was visited myself with these words :

Water it with tears and strong cries.

They have a reference, no doubt, to the work in question, and since I cannot expect that God will

¹ Cowper's protégé brought from St. Albans. He married and settled at Olney in the part of 'Orchard Side' since called 'Dick Coleman's House.'

enable me to do it myself, I shall be happy to hear that He has given that power to you.

Mrs. Unwin has had a good night and continues to mend.—Yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, July 15, 1792.

THE progress of the old nurse in Terence is very much like the progress of my poor patient in the road of recovery. I cannot indeed say that she moves, but advances not, for advances are certainly made, but the progress of a week is hardly perceptible. I know not therefore at present what to say about this long postponed journey. The utmost that it is safe for me to say at this moment is this— You know that you are dear to us both ; true it is that you are so, and equally true that the very instant we feel ourselves at liberty we will fly to Earham. I have been but once within the Hall door since the Courtenays came home, much as I have been pressed to dine there, and have hardly escaped giving a little offence by declining it ; but though I should offend all the world by my obstinacy in this instance, I would not leave my poor Mary alone. Johnny serves me as a representative, and him I send without scruple. As to the affair of Milton, I know not what will become of it. I wrote to Johnson a week since to tell him that the interruption of Mrs. Unwin's illness still continuing, and being likely to continue, I know not when I should be able to proceed. The translations (I said) were finished, except the revisal of a part.

God bless your dear little boy and poet ! I thank

him for exercising his dawning genius upon me, and shall be still happier to thank him in person.

Abbot¹ is painting me so true,
That (trust me) you would stare,
And hardly know, at the first view,
If I were here or there.

I have sat twice; and the few, who have seen his copy of me, are much struck with the resemblance. He is a sober, quiet man, which, considering that I must have him at least a week longer for an inmate, is a great comfort to me.

My Mary sends you her best love. She can walk now, leaning on my arm only, and her speech is certainly much improved. I long to see you. Why cannot you and dear Tom spend the remainder of the summer with us? We might then all set off for Eartham merrily together. But I retract this, conscious that I am unreasonable. It is a wretched world, and what we would, is almost always what we cannot.

Adieu! Love me, and be sure of a return.

W. C.

NOTE.—Cowper in this letter tells Hayley to take no more trouble about the ‘*ai-devant chancellor*,’ and to send him no more verse, no more prose. ‘If what you have already sent succeed not, nothing will.’

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Wednesday, 18 July, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I have hardly a moment to spare, my whole time being engaged to the painter, but I will just tell you, lest you should think me too

¹ ‘1792, July 12.—A stranger went to Mr. Cowper with much luggage,’ etc.—*Teedon’s Diary*. This would be Lemuel Abbott (1760 - 1803), portrait painter, and a frequent contributor to the Royal Academy Exhibitions. His portrait of Cowper is well known. Curiously enough he died insane.

long silent, that Mrs. Unwin continues to gather health and strength, and that as to myself, the rheumatism in my back excepted, I am as well as usual, and yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO THOMAS PARK

Weston Underwood, July 20, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I have been long silent, and must now be short. My time since I wrote last has been almost wholly occupied in suffering. Either indisposition of my own, or of the dearest friend I have, has so entirely engaged my attention, that, except the revision of the two elegies you sent me long since, I have done nothing; nor do I at present foresee the day when I shall be able to do anything. Should Mrs. Unwin recover sufficiently to undertake a journey, I have promised Mr. Hayley¹ to close the summer with a visit to him at Earham. At the best, therefore, I cannot expect to proceed in my main business, till the approach of winter. I am thus thrown so much into arrear respecting Milton, that I already despair of being ready at the time appointed, and so I have told my employer.

I need not say that the drift of this melancholy preface is to apprise you that you must not expect dispatch from me. Such expedition as I can use I will, but I believe you must be very patient.

¹ ' 1792, July 19.—Madam informed me . . . that Mr. C. wanted to go to Hayley but he wished for a word of the Lord from me. I pray the Lord to give me direction. I saw the picture and conversed with Mr. Abbot, who seemed a very affable man. I prayed with Madam.

' July 21.—I this morn solemnly invoked the Lord for a word of direction concerning this journey. I obtained this—“Go and I will be with him,” and afterwards, “He went to Bethel to enquire of the Lord, who said I will go down with thee into Egypt and will bring thee up again.”—*Teedon's Diary*.

It was only one year that I gave to drawing, for I found it an employment hurtful to my eyes, which have always been weak and subject to inflammation. I finished my attempt in this way with three small landscapes, which I presented to a lady.¹ These may, perhaps, exist, but I have now no correspondence with the fair proprietor. Except these, there is nothing remaining to show that I ever aspired to such an accomplishment.

The hymns in the Olney collection marked 'C,' are all of my composition, except one, which bears that initial by a mistake of the printer. Not having the book at hand, I cannot now say which it is.

Wishing you a pleasant time at Margate, and assuring you that I shall receive, with great pleasure, any drawing of yours with which you may favour me, and give it a distinguished place in my very small collection,—I remain, dear Sir, much and sincerely yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH

Weston Underwood, July 21, 1792.

MY DEAREST COZ,—I am crazed with having much to do and doing nothing. Every thing with me has fallen into arrear to such a degree that I almost despair of being able by the utmost industry to redeem the time that I have lost. With difficulty it is that I can steal even now a moment to address a few lines to thee. They must be as few as I can make them. Briefly therefore I say thus:

My portrait is nearly finished, an excellent one in my mind, and in the opinion of all who see it,

¹ Lady Austen.

both for drawing and likeness. It will be completed I believe on Monday. I shall keep it a short time after Abbot is gone, that my two or three friends in this neighbourhood may be gratified with a sight of it, and shall then send it to his house in Caroline Street, Bloomsbury, where it will remain some time. Should it be your wish to view it, you will then have an opportunity, and trust me I think it will afford you as much pleasure, nay, perhaps even more than a sight of the original myself; for you will see it with this thought in your mind, that whether I live or die, while this picture subsists, my charming lineaments and proportions can never be forgotten.

We have not even yet determined absolutely on our journey to Earham, but shall I believe in two or three days decide in favour of it. Hayley interests himself so much in it, and I am persuaded that it bids fair to do us both so much good, that I am sincerely desirous of going. A thousand lions, monsters, and giants are in the way, but perhaps they will all vanish if I have but the courage to face them. Mrs. Unwin, whose weakness might justify her fears, has none. Her trust in the providence of God makes her calm on all occasions.

Should Anonymous have consigned his¹ half year's remittance to your hands, and my namesake William his annual one, thou canst not do better than send them, for I hear a flying rumour that travelling is costly, and that consequently money will be wanted. This moment I receive yours, many thanks for it, and for the draft contained in it.

¹ Theodora Cowper. Cowper evidently never dreamt that it was she who sent the gifts.

I learned lately from Sephus¹ that you are not very well, and know you too well not to know that you hide from me the worst half of your malady, let it be what it may. God preserve thee, restore thy health, and give us a comfortable meeting once more in the winter.

Sam's² wife shall be paid. Mrs. Unwin sends her best love. Johnny goes to Eartham, but not with us, because Sam will be more useful by the way. Johnny, therefore, and Nanny Roberts will jog together in the stage. You shall hear from me as soon as I can after my arrival.

Adieu—must go to be painted—can't add another syllable, except that I am ever thine,

W.M. COWPER.

P.S.—My dear Johnny sends his affectionate compliments. He goes with us;—all in a coach together, which Abbot will send us from town. To-morrow will be my last sitting, and I verily think the portrait, exclusive of the likeness, which is the closest imaginable, one of the best I ever saw. You will see by this *P.S.* that the journey is already determined on. Would to heaven that you could join us!

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, July 22, 1792.

THIS important affair, my dear brother, is at last decided, and we are coming. Wednesday se'nnight,

¹ Mr. Hill.

² Sam Roberts, Cowper's factotum (see vol. i. p. 23). He died 23rd June 1832, and is buried near the porch of Weston Church. His wife, Ann ('Nanny Roberts,' as Cowper here calls her), died 22nd February 1809.

if nothing occur to make a later day necessary, is the day fixed for our journey. Our rate of travelling must depend on Mary's ability to bear it. Our mode of travelling will occupy three days unavoidably, for we shall come in a coach. Abbot finishes my picture to-morrow; on Wednesday he returns to town, and is commissioned to order one down for us, with four steeds to draw it;

. . . 'hollow, pamper'd jades of Asia,
That cannot go but forty miles a day.'¹

Send us our route, for I am as ignorant of it almost, as if I were in a strange country. We shall reach St. Albans, I suppose, the first day; say where we must finish our second day's journey, and at what inn we may best repose? As to the end of the third day, we know where that will find us, viz. in the arms, and under the roof of our beloved Hayley.

General Cowper, having heard a rumour of this intended migration, desires to meet me on the road, that we may once more see each other. He lives at Ham, near Kingston. Shall we go through Kingston, or near it? For I would give him as little trouble as possible, though he offers very kindly to come as far as Barnet for that purpose. Nor must I forget Carwardine,² who so kindly desired to be informed what way we should go. On what point of the road will it be easiest for him to find us? On all these points you must be

¹ Holla, ye pampered jades of Asia!
What! can ye draw but twenty miles a day.

MARLOWE, *Tamburlaine*, Part II. Act 4, Sc. iv.

² Rev. Thomas Carwardine, Hayley's friend.

my oracle. My friend and brother, we shall overwhelm you with our numbers ; this is all the trouble that I have left. My Johnny of Norfolk, happy in the thought of accompanying us, would be broken-hearted to be left behind.

In the midst of all these solicitudes I laugh to think what they are made of, and what an important thing it is for me to travel. Other men steal away from their homes silently, and make no disturbance ; but when I move, houses are turned upside down, maids are turned out of their beds, all the counties through which I pass appear to be in an uproar. Surrey greets me by the mouth of the General, and Essex by that of Carwardine. How strange does all this seem to a man who has seen no bustle, and made none, for twenty years together !—Adieu,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Sunday Morning, 22 July, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—Your letter has relieved me from great anxiety. Without an answer from God as explicit and satisfactory as that which you have obtained for me, I dare not, in Mrs. Unwin's present feeble state, have ventured to so great a distance. I shall now go with as much cheerfulness as is possible in a case like mine.

We purpose to set out on Wednesday se'nnight. You will let us see you before that time of course, and then I will supply you with what will be sufficient for your exigencies till we return. We shall be absent, I suppose, about a month.—I am,
dr. Sir, yrs.,

Wm. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL

July 25, 1792.

MY DEAR MR. BULL,—Engaged as I have been ever since I saw you, it was not possible that I should write sooner; and busy as I am at present, it is not without difficulty that I can write even now: but I promised you a letter, and must endeavour, at least, to be as good as my word. How do you imagine I have been occupied these last ten days? In sitting, not on cockatrice eggs, nor yet to gratify a mere idle humour, nor because I was too sick to move; but because my cousin Johnson has an aunt who has a longing desire of my picture, and because he would, therefore, bring a painter from London to draw it. For this purpose I have been sitting, as I say, these ten days; and am heartily glad that my sitting time is over. You have now, I know, a burning curiosity to learn two things, which I may choose whether I will tell you or not. First, who was the painter; and secondly, how he has succeeded. The painter's name is Abbot. You never heard of him, you say. It is very likely; but there is, nevertheless, such a painter, and an excellent one he is. *Multa sunt quæ bonus Bernardus nec vidit, nec audivit.* To your second inquiry I answer, that he has succeeded to admiration. The likeness is so strong, that when my friends enter the room where my picture¹ is, they start, astonished to see me where they know I am

¹ It represents Cowper in a periwig, green coat, buff waistcoat and breeches (the Throckmorton archery costume). See letter of 29th August 1792. Before him is the writing-desk presented by his cousin, Theodora.

not. Miserable man that you are, to be at Brighton instead of being here, to contemplate this prodigy of art, which, therefore, you can never see; for it goes to London next Monday, to be suspended awhile at Abbot's; and then proceeds into Norfolk, where it will be suspended for ever.

But the picture is not the only prodigy I have to tell you of. A greater belongs to me; and one that you will hardly credit, even on my own testimony. We are on the eve of a journey, and a long one. On this very day se'nnight we set out for Eartham, the seat of my brother bard, Mr. Hayley, on the other side of London, nobody knows where, a hundred and twenty miles off. Pray for us, my friend, that we may have a safe going and return. It is a tremendous exploit, and I feel a thousand anxieties when I think of it. But a promise, made to him when he was here, that we would go if we could, and a sort of persuasion that we can if we will, oblige us to it. The journey and the change of air, together with the novelty to us of the scene to which we are going, may, I hope, be useful to us both; especially to Mrs. Unwin, who has most need of restoratives. She sends her love to you and to Thomas, in which she is sincerely joined by your affectionate

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Thursday, 26 July 1792.

DEAR SIR,—The only effect of the notices you have lately received respecting this journey has been that they have determined me to it, for the temptations to which I am exposed on the subject are

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violent to a degree that will render me quite unable to travel if it continues, or quite unfit to be anywhere except at home when I arrive at Eartham. Last night I had little more than three hours' sleep, being kept awake by the most terrible suggestions concerning the consequences to Mrs. Unwin, and have hardly rested better since I first resolved to go. God in the mean time is silent, the enemy is uncontrolled, and no prayers of mine can obtain the least abatement.

Mrs. Unwin herself rested well last night, and is I hope, a little better this morning.—I am, dr. Sir,
yrs.,

Wm. COWPER.¹

TO THE REV. THOMAS CARWARDINE, EARL'S COLN
PRIORY, NEAR HALSTEAD, ESSEX

Weston Underwood, July 27, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have a short moment in which to tell you, according to your kind request, that we leave Weston and set off for Eartham on Wednesday, the 1st of August. Our route will lie through Kingston, Ripley, and Petworth, for such are the directions I have just received from our dear friend Hayley. In what part of it we shall be nearest to you, is better known to yourself than to me, and there is no part of it in which I shall not be happy to have a glimpse of you. I wish I could be so exact as to have the day and the hour of our probable arrival at every stage, but our rate of travelling must depend altogether on Mrs. Unwin's ability, which renders such precision impossible. In

¹ '1792, June 26.—Recd. a most sorrowful note from the Esqr. of his distress concerning the Journey.'—*Teedon's Diary.*

the hope that we may meet somewhere, I remain,
my dear Sir, much yours, Wm. Cowper.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, July 29, 1792.

Through floods and flames to your retreat
I win my desperate way,
And when we meet, if e'er we meet,
Will echo your huzza !

You will wonder at the word *desperate* in the second line, and at the *if* in the third ; but could you have any conception of the fears I have had to battle with, of the dejection of spirits that I have suffered concerning this journey, you would wonder much more that I still courageously persevere in my resolution to undertake it. Fortunately for my intentions, it happens, that as the day approaches my terrors abate ; for had they continued to be what they were a week since, I must, after all, have disappointed you ; and was actually once on the verge of doing it. I have told you something of my nocturnal experiences, and assure you now, that they were hardly ever more terrific than on this occasion. Prayer has, however, opened my passage at last, and obtained for me a degree of confidence, that I trust will prove a comfortable viaticum to me all the way. On Wednesday, therefore, we set forth.

The terrors, that I have spoken of, would appear ridiculous to most ; but to you they will not, for you are a reasonable creature, and know well, that to whatever cause it be owing (whether to consti-

tution, or to God's express appointment), I am hunted by spiritual hounds in the night season. I cannot help it. You will pity me, and wish it were otherwise; and though you may think there is much of the imaginary in it, will not deem it for that reason an evil less to be lamented. So much for fears and distresses. Soon I hope they shall all have a joyful termination, and I, my Mary, my Johnny, and my dog,¹ be skipping with delight at Earham.

Well! this picture is at last finished, and well finished, I can assure you. Every creature that has seen it has been astonished at the resemblance. Sam's boy bowed to it, and Beau walked up to it wagging his tail as he went, and evidently showing that he acknowledged its likeness to his master. It is a half-length, as it is technically, but absurdly called; that is to say, it gives all but the foot and ankle. To-morrow it goes to town, and will hang some months at Abbot's, when it will be sent to its due destination in Norfolk.

I hope, or rather wish, that at Earham I may recover that habit of study, which, inveterate as it once seemed, I now seem to have lost,—lost to such a degree, that it is even painful to me to think of what it will cost me to acquire it again.

Adieu! my dear, dear Hayley; God give us a happy meeting! Mary sends her love. She is in pretty good plight this morning, having slept well, and, for her part, has no fears at all about the journey.—Ever yours,

W. C.

¹ Beau.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

July 30, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Like you, I am obliged to snatch short opportunities of corresponding with my friends; and to write what I can, not what I would. Your kindness in giving me the first letter after your return claims my thanks; and my tardiness to answer it would demand an apology, if, having been here, and witnessed how much my time is occupied in attendance on my poor patient, you could possibly want one. She proceeds, I trust, in her recovery; but at so slow a rate, that the difference made in a week is hardly perceptible to me who am always with her. This last night has been the worst she has known since her illness—entirely sleepless till seven in the morning. Such ill rest seems but an indifferent preparation for a long journey, which we propose to undertake on Wednesday, when we set out for Eartham, on a visit to Mr. Hayley. The journey itself will, I hope, be useful to her; and the air of the sea, blowing over the South Downs, together with the novelty of the scene to us, will, I hope, be serviceable to us both. You may imagine that we, who have been resident on one spot so many years, do not engage in such an enterprise without some anxiety. Persons accustomed to travel would make themselves merry with mine; it seems so disproportioned to the occasion. Once I have been on the point of determining not to go, and even since we fixed the day; my troubles have been so insupportable. But it has

been made a matter of much prayer, and at last it has pleased God to satisfy me, in some measure, that His will corresponds with our purpose, and that He will afford us His protection. You, I know, will not be unmindful of us during our absence from home; but will obtain for us, if your prayers can do it, all that we would ask for ourselves—the presence and favour of God, a salutary effect of our journey, and a safe return.

I rejoiced, and had reason to do so, in your coming to Weston, for I think the Lord came with you. Not, indeed, to abide with me; not to restore me to that intercourse with Him which I enjoyed twenty years ago; but to awaken in me, however, more spiritual feeling than I have experienced, except in two instances, during all that time. The comforts that I have received under your ministry, in better days, all rushed upon my recollection; and, during two or three transient moments, seemed to be in a degree renewed. You will tell me that transient as they were, they were yet evidences of a love that is not so; and I am desirous to believe it.—With Mrs. Unwin's warm remembrances, and my cousin Johnson's best compliments, I am sincerely yours,

W.M. COWPER.

P.S.—If I hear from you while I am abroad, your letter will find me at William Hayley's, Esq., Eartham, near Chichester. We purpose to return in about a month.¹

¹ ‘1792, July 31.—I writ a farewell letter to the Esq.

‘Aug. 1.—Found they went to-day at 8 of the clock in good spirits.’—*Teedon's Diary*.

VI. EARTHAM¹

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Eartham, near Chichester, Aug. 5, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—This journey, of which we all had some fears, and I a thousand, has by the mercy of God been happily and well performed, and we have met with no terrors by the way. I indeed myself was a little daunted by the tremendous height of the Sussex hills, in comparison of which all that I had seen elsewhere are dwarfs: but I only was alarmed; Mrs. Unwin had no such sensations, but was always cheerful from the beginning of our expedition to the end of it. At Barnet we found the inn so noisy that I was almost driven to despair by the dread that she would get no rest; but I was happily disappointed. She slept about four hours, and seemed as much refreshed as if she had slept twice as many. At Ripley we had a silent inn, and rested well. The next day, but late, we arrived at Eartham; and now begin to feel ourselves, under the hospitable roof of our amiable friend, well-re-quited for all the fatigue, the heat, and the clouds of dust that we endured in the journey.

I had one glimpse—at least I was willing to hope it was a glimpse—of heavenly light by the way; an answer I suppose to many fervent prayers of yours. Continue to pray for us, and when anything occurs worth communicating let us know it.

Mrs. Unwin is in charming spirits, to which the

¹ ‘1792, Aug. 7.—I had the pleasure and happiness of hearing from the Esq. of their safely arriving at Eartham. For this I praise the Lord.’—*Teedon's Diary.*

incomparable air and delightful scenes of Earham have much contributed. But our thanks are always due to the Giver of all good for these and all His benefits; for without His blessing Paradise itself would not cheer the soul that knows Him.

Adieu.—I am yours with many thanks for all your spiritual aids.

Wm. COWPER.

Mrs. Unwin sends her kind remembrances.

TO THE REV. SAMUEL GREATHEED

Earham, Aug. 6, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,—Having first thanked you for your affectionate and acceptable letter, I will proceed, as well as I can, to answer your equally affectionate request that I would send you early news of our arrival at Earham. Here we are in the most elegant mansion that I have ever inhabited, and surrounded by the most delightful pleasure grounds that I have ever seen; but which, dissipated as my powers of thought are at present, I will not undertake to describe. It shall suffice me to say that they occupy three sides of a hill, which in Buckinghamshire might well pass for a mountain, and from the summit of which is beheld a most magnificent landscape bounded by the sea, and in one part of it by the Isle of Wight, which may also be seen plainly from the window of the library in which I am writing.

It pleased God to carry us both through the journey with far less difficulty and inconvenience than I expected. I began it indeed with a thousand fears, and when we arrived the first evening at

Barnet, found myself oppressed in spirit to a degree that could hardly be exceeded. I saw Mrs. Unwin weary, as she might well be, and heard such a variety of noises, both within the house and without, that I concluded she would get no rest. But I was mercifully disappointed. She rested, though not well, yet sufficiently; and when we finished our next day's journey at Ripley, we were both in better condition, both of body and mind, than on the day preceding. At Ripley we found a quiet inn, that housed, as it happened, that night, no company but ourselves. There we slept well, and rose perfectly refreshed; and, except some terrors that I felt at passing over the Sussex hills by moonlight, met with little to complain of till we arrived about ten o'clock at Earham. Here we are as happy as it is in the power of terrestrial good to make us. It is almost a Paradise in which we dwell; and our reception has been the kindest that it was possible for friendship and hospitality to contrive. Our host mentions you with great respect, and bids me tell you that he esteems you highly. Mrs. Unwin, who is, I think, in some points, already the better for her excursion, unites with mine her best compliments both to yourself and Mrs. Greatheed. I have much to see and enjoy before I can be perfectly apprised of all the delights of Earham, and will therefore now subscribe myself,—Yours, my dear Sir, with great sincerity,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

7th Aug. 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—After much dust and heat, and many severe shocks and jumblings in our pass-

age over the Sussex hills, we found ourselves between nine and ten at night at the door of our hospitable friend Hayley. His house is all elegance, his scenery the most delightful that can be imagined, and his reception of us as cordial as possible.

Mrs. Unwin endured the fatigue of her long expedition with much less injury to her spirits than I expected, and being now a little refreshed by the undisturbed slumbers of two good nights at Eartham, is more cheerful than I have seen her many months. In short I have reason to hope for every good effect of this excursion, both to her and to myself.

So much in shorthand for what has passed since we parted at the Bridge-foot. I will now thank you with much sincerity for your kindness in meeting us at Barnet, and for the relief afforded to my weary and jaded spirits by your presence and conversation. This done, I shall proceed to furnish you with a fresh opportunity to oblige me. Our coachman, you must know, for what reason I cannot tell, when I would have put into his hands the money due to his master, desired to be excused the charge of it. His own he received, and the postillion his, but the coach and the horses still remain unpaid for. I will beg you therefore to call on Abbot who recommended Samuel the proprietor to me, that from him you may inform yourself where he lives. Five days pay are due to him, at the rate of a guinea and half per day, making in the whole seven guineas and a half, which deducted from thirty-five, the amount of my cousin's note, will leave £27, 18s. in your hands, and for this I shall draw on you in a day or two, begging you in the mean time to discharge the arrears to Samuel.

I hope that being accustomed in the way of your profession to unreal perplexities, you will not find my state of this matter too hard for you; for that it is perplexed I doubt not, my head being at present incapable of producing anything that is not so. To relieve it therefore from the trouble of thinking, a labour to which it is just now perfectly unequal, and to relieve you likewise from the trouble of expending any more enigmas, I will conclude myself, with our united best comps. to yrself and Mrs. Rose, most sincerely yours,

W.M. COWPER.

Earham, near Chichester.

I have at last a letter, a very civil one, from Johnson, for which honour I suspect that I am obliged to you.

TO MRS. COURTENAY¹

Earham, Aug. 12, 1792.

MY DEAREST CATHARINA,—Though I have travelled far, nothing did I see in my travels that surprised me half so agreeably as your kind letter; for high as my opinion of your good nature is, I had no hopes of hearing from you till I should have written first;—a pleasure which I intended to allow myself the first opportunity.

After three days' confinement in a coach, and suffering as we went all that could be suffered from excessive heat and dust, we found ourselves late in the evening at the door of our friend Hayley. In every other respect the journey was extremely

¹ ‘Catharina’ wife of Mr. George Courtenay, afterwards Sir George Throckmorton.

pleasant. At the Mitre in Barnet, where we lodged the first evening, we found our friend Mr. Rose, who had walked thither from his house in Chancery Lane to meet us; and at Kingston, where we dined the second day, I found my old and much valued friend General Cowper, whom I had not seen in thirty years, and but for this journey should never have seen again. Mrs. Unwin, on whose account I had a thousand fears before we set out, suffered as little from fatigue as myself, and begins I hope already to feel some beneficial effect from the air of Earham, and the exercise that she takes in one of the most delightful pleasure-grounds in the world. They occupy three sides of a hill, lofty enough to command a view of the sea, which skirts the horizon to a length of many miles, with the Isle of Wight at the end of it. The inland scene is equally beautiful, consisting of a large and deep valley well cultivated, and enclosed by magnificent hills, all crowned with wood. I had, for my part, no conception that a poet could be the owner of such a Paradise; and his house is as elegant as his scenes are charming.

But think not, my dear Catharina, that amidst all these beauties I shall lose the remembrance of the peaceful, but less splendid Weston. Your precincts will be as dear to me as ever, when I return; though when that day will arrive I know not, our host being determined, as I plainly see, to keep us as long as possible. Give my best love to your husband. Thank him most kindly for his attention to the old bard of Greece, and pardon me that I do not send you now an epitaph for Fop.¹ I am not sufficiently recollected to compose

¹ A dog that belonged to Lady Throckmorton.

even a bagatelle at present: but in due time you shall receive it.

Hayley, who will some time or other, I hope, see you at Weston, is already prepared to love you both, and being passionately fond of music, longs much to hear you.—Adieu !

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Earham, Aug. 13, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am sorry at my heart and ashamed that you should have occasion to repeat your disagreeable visit to Samuel. He might, I think, have made the journey to Weston in a day, but since he did not, I had much rather pay him at once for seven days than give you the trouble of expostulating with him any further. He ought perhaps to know that I spared one of his horses, leaving it at Petworth, nine miles from Earham, and at my own cost procured another in its stead. You will oblige me if you will be so kind as to let me know what remains after settlement of this troublesome concern, that I may draw accordingly.

Since I came here I have received a very civil letter from Johnson, for which I suspect myself indebted to you, in which he answers the question that I asked him, as I told you, about six weeks since, concerning punctuality of publication. He hopes, he says, to put forth the first number at the time appointed, but as to the rest, seems to think it most probable that they will be delayed much longer. An answer that affords me some relief in my spirit and encourages me to hope that notwith-

standing past hindrances I may yet be ready before I am summoned.

He has retained, he says, a lady to write the *Life of Milton*, who, he doubts not, will produce one equal in point of good sense and genius to Mr. Hayley's. A hope which he is certainly free to entertain, but which perhaps it would have been more discreet to have suppressed. I shall accordingly tell him, when I reply, that any lady of his choice will doubtless execute her part with sufficiency, but that she must work hard indeed to excel my friend of Earham. And this is true, if I am competent to judge, for he has read to me all that he has already written, and seems to me to have acquitted himself incomparably.

My friend's house is brimful. Mrs. Charlotte Smith¹ is here, an amiable, agreeable woman, interesting both by her manners and her misfortunes. Romney also is here, and scarce recovered from the tedium of the last sitting, I must sit again. It would add much to my happiness were you of the party. I have prepared Hayley to think highly, that is, justly, of you, and the time will come, I hope, when in person you will supersede all need of my recommendation.

Mrs. Unwin gathers strength, and this very day crossed the room alone for the first time, forgetting that for so many weeks she has always had need of a supporter. I have indeed great hopes from the air and exercise which this fine season affords her opportunity to use, that ere we return she will be herself again. Her love, Johnny's, and mine attend

¹ Charlotte Smith, novelist (1749-1806), wrote *Ethelinda* (1789), *The Old Manor House* (1793), etc.

you, with our united comps. to Mrs. Rose, and Hayley bids me add his also; he was as much mortified as yourself that he missed you on a late occasion.—I am, truly yours,

Wm. COWPER.

The newspaper you were so kind as to send arrived just before me.

From circumstances of rural postage this answer could not possibly reach you sooner.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

Earham, Aug. 16, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I must be shorter than I would be, and must scribble as fast as I can, being wanted by Romney, who is here, and to whom I am sitting for my picture.

Our journey, as I believe I told you in my last, was not undertaken without prayer, or without some reasonable ground of hope that God would prosper it. It has accordingly prospered hitherto, and was performed on Mrs. Unwin's part with much less fatigue than I expected. The first day's labours seemed to affect her most; for when we arrived at Barnet, where Mr. Rose met us, having walked thither for that purpose, her voice failed through weariness, and she could scarce articulate; but the next day's journey to Ripley she performed with much greater ease; and when we reached Earham, on the evening of the third day, was as well and seemed almost as fresh as when we set out. Thus it has pleased God to answer our prayers for a

safe conveyance hither, and I have a hope that He will farther answer them, by making the air of this place, and the beautiful scenery of it, conducive to the renewal both of her health and spirits, and of mine. It is certain that we could hardly have travelled to a more delightful scene, or to a purer air. The garden, or rather pleasure-ground, is on a hill; the summit of which commands an extensive view of the sea, at nine miles distance, and of the Isle of Wight; and in a bower on that summit Mrs. Unwin and I were sitting when Samuel brought me your welcome letter. I thank you for it, and for your verses enclosed in it. Natural as they are, and free from all affectation of finery, we found them very affecting, and so did my friend Hayley afterward, to whom I lent them for his perusal.

Here Mrs. Unwin walks more than she did or could be persuaded to do at Weston; the cheerfulness naturally inspired by agreeable novelty, I suppose, is that which enables her to do it; and when she is weary she gets into a chaise drawn by Socket¹ and little Hayley, and pushed behind either by me or my cousin Johnson;² the motion of which differs indeed from that of walking, but on a rough gravel, such as this country affords, is hardly less beneficial.

Perhaps when I write again I shall be less hurried, though every day is crowded with employment. At present I can only add my best love and Mrs. Unwin's together, and Johnny's best compliments to yourself and Miss Catlett, and that I am, my dear friend, most truly yours,

WM. COWPER.

¹ A lad brought by Hayley from Weston Underwood.

² Cowper often calls him 'Johnny of Norfolk.'

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Eartham, Aug. 18, 1792.

WISHES in this world are generally vain, and in the next we shall make none. Every day I wish you were of our party, knowing how happy you would be in a place where we have nothing to do but enjoy beautiful scenery, and converse agreeably.

Mrs. Unwin's health continues to improve; and even I, who was well when I came, find myself still better.—Yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Eartham, Sunday, August 19, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I am glad that you are for the most part in a frame of mind so comfortable, and obliged to you for making us so much the subjects of your prayer. Your intercessions for Mrs. Unwin, I have reason to believe, are heard. Her progress towards recovery is indeed slow, for she cannot yet walk or even rise from her chair without assistance, but her strength is nevertheless increased to a degree that makes me hope she will be able to do both before the winter. Here she can always walk when it does not actually rain, for the soil of the country is chalk; the whole pleasure-ground lies on a declivity, and is intersected by alleys well gravelled, well enclosed and arched over, so that she can never be deprived of her daily portion of air and exercise either by high winds or a soil soaked with wet as she frequently is at Weston. If her recovery be promoted by our journey hither I shall account that alone sufficient evidence of our being providentially called to it, but

other evidence of such a call I see none at present, being myself at intervals as much oppressed by the heaviest and darkest despair as ever I was at Weston. Change of company and change of scene at first gave a little lift to my animal spirits, but that effect, of no great value in itself, is of short duration too, and sure to cease with the novelty that gave it birth.

I cannot at present tell you at what time we shall probably return, but our friendly host, I know, will keep us as long as possible. The middle of September, however, is the time when I imagine we shall leave Earham, since the shortening days and the approach of a cold season will make it unadvisable to stay longer.

I am glad that your family is as well as when we saw you last, and with Mrs. Unwin's kind remembrances, remain much your friend and well-wisher,

W.M. COWPER.

TO MRS. COURTENAY

Earham, August 25, 1792.

WITHOUT waiting for an answer to my last, I send my dear Catharina the epitaph she desired, composed as well as I could compose it in a place where every object, being still new to me, distracts my attention, and makes me as awkward at verse as if I had never dealt in it. Here it is.

EPITAPH ON FOP,¹

A DOG BELONGING TO LADY THROCKMORTON.

Though once a puppy, and though Fop by name,
Here moulders one whose bones some honour claim,

¹ These lines were inscribed on the pedestal of a monumental urn in the Wilderness of Weston.

No sycophant, although of spaniel race,
And though no hound, a martyr to the chase—
Ye squirrels, rabbits, leverets, rejoice,
Your haunts no longer echo to his voice ;
This record of his fate exulting view,
He died worn out with vain pursuit of you.
‘ Yes (the indignant shade of Fop replies)—
And worn with vain pursuit Man also dies.’

I am here, as I told you in my last, delightfully situated, and in the enjoyment of all that the most friendly hospitality can impart; yet do I neither forget Weston, nor my friends at Weston; on the contrary, I have at length, though much and kindly pressed to make a longer stay, determined on the day of our departure,—on the 17th of September we shall leave Earham; four days will be necessary to bring us home again, for I am under a promise to General Cowper to dine with him on the way, which cannot be done comfortably, either to him or to ourselves, unless we sleep that night at Kingston.

The air of this place has been, I believe, beneficial to us both. I indeed was in tolerable health before I set out, but have acquired since I came both a better appetite, and a knack of sleeping almost as much in a single night as formerly in two. Whether double quantities of that article will be favourable to me as a poet, time must show. About myself, however, I care little, being made of materials so tough, as not to threaten me even now, at the end of so many *lustrums*, with any thing like a speedy dissolution. My chief concern has been about Mrs. Unwin, and my chief comfort at this moment is, that she likewise has received, I hope, considerable benefit by the journey.

Tell my dear George that I begin to long to

behold him again ; and did it not savour of ingratitude to the friend, under whose roof I am so happy at present, should be impatient to find myself once more under yours.

Adieu ! my dear Catharina. I have nothing to add in the way of news, except that Romney has drawn me in crayons ; by the suffrage of all here, extremely like.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH

Earlham, Aug. 26, 1792.

I KNOW not how it is, my dearest coz, but in a new scene, and surrounded by strange objects, I find my powers of thinking dissipated to a degree that makes it difficult to me even to write a letter, and even a letter to you ; but such a letter as I can, I will, and have the fairest chance to succeed this morning, Hayley, Romney, Hayley's son, and Beau, being all gone together to the sea for bathing. The sea, you must know, is nine miles off, so that unless stupidity prevent, I shall have opportunity to write not only to you, but to poor Hurdis also, who is broken-hearted for the loss of his favourite sister,¹ lately dead : and whose letter, giving an account of it, which I received yesterday, drew tears from the eyes of all our party. My only comfort respecting even yourself is, that you write in good spirits, and assure me that you are in a state of recovery ; otherwise I should mourn not only for Hurdis, but for myself, lest a certain event should reduce me, and in a short time too, to a situation as distressing as his ; for though nature designed you only for my cousin, you have had

¹ Sally.

a sister's place in my affections ever since I knew you. The reason is, I suppose, that having no sister, the daughter of my own mother, I thought it proper to have one, the daughter of yours. Certain it is, that I can by no means afford to lose you; and that unless you will be upon honour with me, to give me always a true account of yourself, at least when we are not together, I shall always be unhappy, because always suspicious that you deceive me.

Now for ourselves. I am, without the least dissimulation, in good health; my spirits are about as good as you have ever seen them; and if increase of appetite and a double portion of sleep be advantageous, such are the advantages that I have received from this migration. As to that gloominess of mind, which I have had these twenty years, it cleaves to me even here; and could I be translated to Paradise, unless I left my body behind me, would cleave to me even there also. It is my companion for life, and nothing will ever divorce us. So much for myself. Mrs. Unwin is evidently the better for her jaunt, though by no means as she was before this last attack; still wanting help when she would rise from her seat, and a support when walking; but she is able to use more exercise than she could at home, and moves with rather a less tottering step. God knows what He designs for me; but when I see those who are dearer to me than myself distempered and enfeebled, and myself as strong as in the days of my youth, I tremble for the solitude in which a few years may place me. I wish her and you to die before me, indeed, but not till I am more likely to follow immediately. Enough of this!

Romney has drawn me in crayons, and in the

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opinion of all here, with his best hand, and with the
most exact resemblance possible.

The 17th of September is the day on which I
intend to leave Eartham. We shall then have been
six weeks resident here; a holiday time long enough
for a man who has much to do. And now farewell!

W. C.

P.S.—Hayley, whose love for me seems to be truly
that of a brother, has given me his picture, drawn
by Romney about fifteen years ago;—an admirable
likeness.

TO THE REV. JAMES HURDIS

Eartham, Aug. 26, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,—Your kind but very affecting
letter found me not at Weston, to which place it
was directed, but in a bower of my friend Hayley's
garden at Eartham, where I was sitting with Mrs.
Unwin. We both knew, the moment we saw it,
from whom it came; and observing a red seal, both
comforted ourselves that all was well at Burwash:¹
but we soon felt that we were called not to rejoice,
but to mourn with you. We do indeed sincerely
mourn with you; and if it will afford you any
consolation to know it, you may be assured, that every
eye here has testified what our hearts have suffered
for you. Your loss is great, and your disposition
I perceive such as exposes you to feel the whole
weight of it. I will not add to your sorrow by a
vain attempt to assuage it; your own good sense
and the piety of your principles will, of course,
suggest to you the most powerful motives of

¹ Village in Sussex, near Battle.

acquiescence in the will of God. You will be sure to recollect that the stroke, severe as it is, is not the stroke of an enemy, but of a father; and will find I trust hereafter that like a father he has done you good by it. Thousands have been able to say, and myself as loud as any of them, It has been good for me that I was afflicted; but time is necessary to work us to this persuasion, and in due time it shall be yours. Mr. Hayley, who tenderly sympathizes with you, has enjoined me to send you as pressing an invitation as I can frame, to join me at this place. I have every motive to wish your consent. Both your benefit and my own, which I believe would be abundantly answered by your coming, ought to make me eloquent in such a cause. Here you will find silence and retirement in perfection, when you would seek them; and here such company as I have no doubt would suit you; all cheerful, but not noisy; and all alike disposed to love you: you and I seem to have here a fair opportunity of meeting. It were a pity we should be in the same county, and not come together. I am here till the 17th of September, an interval that will afford you time to make the necessary arrangements, and to gratify me at last with an interview which I have long desired. Let me hear from you soon, that I may have double pleasure,—the pleasure of expecting, as well as that of seeing you.

Mrs. Unwin, I thank God, though still a sufferer by her last illness, is much better, and has received considerable benefit by the air of Earham. She adds to mine her affectionate compliments, and joins me and Hayley in this invitation.

Mr. Romney is here, and a young man, a cousin

of mine. I tell you who we are, that you may not be afraid of us.

Adieu ! May the Comforter of all the afflicted who seek Him, be yours. God bless you. W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Eartham, 27 Aug. 1792.

DEAR SIR,—It is merely in order to prevent suspicions of neglect on my part that I ever write to you at those times when my spirits are particularly depressed. For I know that the melancholy recital of what I suffer has a contagious effect on *your* spirits, and has also a natural tendency to shake your confidence in those answers which you obtain in fervent prayer for us. I should therefore be silent at all such times, could I believe or hope that you would ascribe that silence to its proper cause, and not make you, as I do too often, a partaker of my sorrows. At present, however, I have nothing very distressing to relate. The worst I can say is that my nightly and morning experiences continue pretty much the same as when I was at home. I always wake more or less in terror, and can seldom attain to any degree of cheerfulness till an hour or two after rising. Then the employments of the day¹ and the incidents of it divert my attention, and my looks and feelings become much like those of other people. Except indeed that I never can forget for

¹ Cowper was busy with his translations of Milton's Latin and Italian poems. Says 'Johnny of Norfolk': 'Hayley revised them, and made so many alterations, that when I came to make a fair copy for the Press, I was quite shocked to see some of the bold and forcible language of our dear bard crossed out and supplanted by some flimsy tinsel of his Brother Poet. . . . I am sure my cousin could not like it.'—*Letters of Lady Hesketh to the Rev. John Johnson, LL.D.*, edited by C. B. Johnson.

a moment my exclusion from the church of God and from all communion with Him.

Mrs. Unwin, and I wish to be thankful for it, continues to receive benefit by the air of Eartham. She is still indeed so feeble as to require assistance as often as she moves, and can neither amuse herself by work or reading, for her sight remains imperfect and her fingers still refuse to perform their office. But I can yet perceive an accession of strength, for though she can do nothing without help, she does everything with less help than before she came hither.

The day I have named for our departure from this place is the 17th of September. Mr. Hayley is apprised of my intention, and with some difficulty has been persuaded to acquiesce in it. He wished us to stay till Xmas, and indeed has more than once endeavoured to fix us here entirely. Our journey will cost us four days, for I am under a necessity of spending one at Kingston. On the 20th, therefore, if it please God to favour our hopes and designs, we shall find ourselves once more at Weston. Till then adieu. I may perhaps write again, but cannot be sure of it, my opportunities of writing at this place are so few and my correspondents are so many. Cease not to be mindful of us in your prayers, and believe me, with Mrs. Unwin's kind remembrances of you and yours,—Your sincere friend,

Wm. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Eartham, Aug. 29, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I take a short opportunity, for here I have no other, to thank you for your

kindness in executing my commission and for executing it so well. The pocket-book is perfectly elegant, the most elegant indeed of the kind that I have ever seen, and has accordingly proved most acceptable to the little man to whom I prescribed it.

You ought to be here and not I. You would contribute much to the entertainment of the party, but as for me I have lived so long secluded from the world that I am perfectly ignorant of all its modern history, and can only listen and ask questions, for questions I ask, merely that I may give some proof of attention. Mrs. Smith,¹ who left us about ten days ago, returned yesterday, and Hayley went to his cottage at the sea-side in the afternoon, whence he returned not till this morning; so that we were to shift for conversation in the evening as well as we could without him. Then I felt the truth of what I have often said, that a man who has been thirty years a hermit is fit only to be a hermit still; for had not Romney been here to divert her, who was well qualified by his knowledge of all that passes in London at the present day to do it, the poor lady must have suffered a famine of colloquial diet.

I rather feared by your silence on that topic, that you had seen my picture² and were not satisfied with

¹ Charlotte Smith. She was then writing her novel *The Old Manor House*.

² The following are the principal portraits of Cowper.

1. A profile taken at Olney.
2. The oil-painting by Abbott. Painted in July 1792 at Weston.
See letters of that date.
3. The portrait in crayons by Romney. Drawn in August 1792
at Earham. (This is not the picture in the National Portrait
Gallery.)
4. A sketch by [Sir] Thomas Lawrence. Drawn at Weston in
October 1793. See Letters of September and October 1793.

it, and am happy to learn from your letter to my cousin that I was mistaken. As to the dress, though I believe there is some weight in your objection to it, I can hardly think it will be worth while to alter it. Green and buff are colours in which I am oftener seen than in any others, and are become almost as natural to me as to a parrot, and the dress was chosen indeed principally for that reason. Romney has succeeded equally well in drawing my head only; but my head in a different aspect—little more than a profile. I have now, I think, been sufficiently a subject of the pencil, and comfort myself frequently with the thought that I have no more penance to undergo of that kind.

On the 17th of September we take leave of Earham, where the end of our journey, I hope, has been completely answered. My spirits will have been somewhat refreshed and recruited, our benevolent host as well as ourselves gratified, and Mrs. Unwin so far restored as to be in some degree prepared to encounter a long winter. She partakes with me in the joy of knowing that you and yours are well and unites her best compliments with those of Mr. Hayley and my cousin Johnson.—I am sincerely yours,

Wm. COWPER.

P.S.—I drew some days since for twenty guineas payable to Mr. Chaldecott.

TO LADY HESKETH

Earham, Sept. 9, 1792.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,—I determine, if possible, to send you one more letter, or at least, if possible, once more to send you something like one, before

we leave Earham. But I am in truth so unaccountably local in the use of my pen, that, like the man in the fable, who could leap well no where but at Rhodes, I seem incapable of writing at all, except at Weston. This is, as I have already told you, a delightful place; more beautiful scenery I have never beheld or expect to behold; but the charms of it, uncommon as they are, have not in the least alienated my affections from Weston. The genius of that place suits me better,—it has an air of snug concealment, in which a disposition like mine feels itself peculiarly gratified; whereas here I see from every window woods like forests, and hills like mountains,—a wilderness, in short, that rather increases my natural melancholy, and which, were it not for the agreeables I find within, would soon convince me that mere change of place can avail me little. Accordingly, I have not looked out for a house in Sussex, nor shall.

The intended day of our departure continues to be the 17th. I hope to reconduct Mrs. Unwin to the Lodge with her health considerably mended: but it is in the article of speech chiefly, and in her powers of walking, that she is sensible of much improvement. Her sight and her hand still fail her, so that she can neither read nor work; mortifying circumstances both to her, who is never willingly idle.

On the 18th I purpose to dine with the General, and to rest that night at Kingston; but the pleasure I shall have in the interview will hardly be greater than the pain I shall feel at the end of it, for we shall part probably to meet no more.

Johnny, I know, has told you that Mr. Hurdis is

here. Distressed by the loss of his sister,¹ he has renounced the place where she died for ever, and is about to enter on a new course of life at Oxford. You would admire him much. He is gentle in his manners, and delicate in his person, resembling our poor friend Unwin, both in face and figure, more than any one I have ever seen. But he has not, at least he has not at present, his vivacity.

I have corresponded since I came here with Mrs. Courtenay, and had yesterday a very kind letter from her.

Adieu, my dear; may God bless you. Write to me as soon as you can after the 20th. I shall then be at Weston, and indulging myself in the hope that I shall ere long see you there also. W. C.

TO MRS. COURTENAY, WESTON UNDERWOOD.

Earham, Sept. 10, 1792.

MY DEAR CATHARINA,—I am not so uncourteous a knight as to leave your last kind letter, and the last I hope that I shall receive for a long time to come, without an attempt, at least, to acknowledge and to send you something in the shape of an answer to it; but having been obliged to dose myself last night with laudanum, on account of a little nervous fever, to which I am always subject, and for which I find it the best remedy, I feel myself this morning particularly under the influence of Lethean vapours, and, consequently, in danger of being uncommonly stupid!

¹ Sally. Cowper had written for her in March 1792, *Epitaph on a Free but Tame Redbreast*, Globe Ed. p. 385. See Letters of March 2, 1792 and March 23, 1792.

You can hardly have sent me intelligence that would have gratified me more than that of my two dear friends, Sir John and Lady Throckmorton, having departed from Paris two days before the terrible 10th of August.¹ I have had many anxious thoughts on their account; and am truly happy to learn that they have sought a more peaceful region, while it was yet permitted them to do so. They will not, I trust, revisit those scenes of tumult and horror while they shall continue to merit that description. We are here all of one mind respecting the cause in which the Parisians are engaged; wish them a free people, and as happy as they can wish themselves. But their conduct has not always pleased us: we are shocked at their sanguinary proceedings, and begin to fear, myself in particular, that they will prove themselves unworthy, because incapable of enjoying it, of the inestimable blessings of liberty. My daily toast is, Sobriety and Freedom to the French; for they seem as destitute of the former, as they are eager to secure the latter.

We still hold our purpose of leaving Earham on the 17th; and again my fears on Mrs. Unwin's account begin to trouble me; but they are now not quite so reasonable as in the first instance. If she could bear the fatigue of travelling then, she is more equal to it at present; and supposing that nothing happens to alarm her, which is very probable, may be expected to reach Weston in much better condition than when she left it. Her improvement, however, is chiefly in her looks, and in the articles of speaking and walking; for she can neither rise

¹ August 10th, Universal insurrection of the armed population of Paris. Tuilleries forced. Swiss Guards cut to pieces.

from her chair without help, nor walk without a support; nor read, nor use her needles. Give my love to the good Doctor, and make him acquainted with the state of his patient, since he, of all men, seems to have the best right to know it.

I am proud that you are pleased with the Epitaph I sent you, and shall be still prouder to see it perpetuated by the chisel.¹ It is all that I have done since here I came, and all that I have been able to do. I wished, indeed, to have requited Romney for his well-drawn copy of me, in rhyme; and have more than once or twice attempted it: but I find, like the man in the fable, who could leap only at Rhodes, that verse is almost impossible to me except at Weston.—Tell my friend George that I am every day mindful of him, and always love him; and bid him by no means to vex himself about the tardiness of Andrews.² Remember me affectionately to William, and to Pitcairn, whom I shall hope to find with you at my return; and should you see Mr. Buchanan, to him also.—I have now charged you with commissions enow, and having added Mrs. Unwin's best compliments and told you that I long to see you again, will conclude myself, my dear Catharina, most truly yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Earlham, 15th Sept., 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I take a short opportunity to thank you for your two last letters, and shall be happy if I live to be able to thank God for the contents

¹ He is referring to the pedestal of the monumental urn.

² James Andrews of Olney, who was to make the urn and pedestal
See footnote vol. i. p. 192.

of them, especially for the notices, on which I ought to set the highest value.

I write now merely to inform you that our purpose to leave Eartham on Monday the 17th remains unaltered, and to repeat what I said before, that if it please God we shall reach Weston on Wednesday evening, or on Thursday at the latest. Whether on the former day or on the latter will depend on Mrs. Unwin's ability to travel. She is better than when we set out, but I am doubtful if you will find her so much mended as perhaps you expect.

The season is already become wintry, and the coldness of this situation, much bleaker than our own, affects her much. An inland country will now suit her best, and for her sake I shall rejoice at every turn of the wheel that conveys us towards our home.

With her kind remembrances to you and yours, and our united thanks for your pious remembrances of us,—I remain, dear Sir, your sincere friend,

WM. COWPER.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

The Sun, at Kingston, Sept. 18, 1792.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—With no sinister accident to retard or terrify us, we find ourselves, at a quarter before one, arrived safe at Kingston. I left you with a heavy heart, and with a heavy heart took leave of our dear Tom, at the bottom of the chalk-hill. But soon after this last separation, my troubles gushed from my eyes and then I was better.

We must now prepare for our visit to the

General. I add no more, therefore, than our dearest remembrances and prayers that God may bless you and yours, and reward you an hundred-fold for all your kindness. Tell Tom I shall always hold him dear for his affectionate attentions to Mrs. Unwin. From her heart the memory of him can never be erased. Johnny loves you all, and has his share in all these acknowledgments.

Adieu !

W. C.

VII. AT WESTON UNDERWOOD AGAIN

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, Sept. 21, 1792.

MY DEAR HAYLEY,—Chaos himself, even the chaos of Milton, is not surrounded with more confusion, nor has a mind more completely in a hubbub, than I experience at the present moment. At our first arrival, after long absence, we find an hundred orders to servants necessary, a thousand things to be restored to their proper places, and an endless variety of minutiae to be adjusted; which though individually of little importance, are most momentous in the aggregate. In these circumstances I find myself so indisposed to writing, that save to yourself I would on no account attempt it; but to you I will give such a recital as I can of all that has passed since I sent you that short note from Kingston, knowing that if it be a perplexed recital, you will consider the cause and pardon it. I will begin with a remark, in which I am inclined to think you will agree with me, that there is some-

times more true heroism passing in a corner, and on occasions that make no noise in the world, than has often been exercised by those whom that world esteems her greatest heroes, and on occasions the most illustrious; I hope so at least; for all the heroism I have to boast and all the opportunities I have of displaying any, are of a private nature. After writing the note I immediately began to prepare for my appointed visit to Ham; but the struggles that I had with my own spirit, labouring as I did under the most dreadful dejection, are never to be told. I would have given the world to have been excused. I went, however, and carried my point against myself with a heart riven asunder. I have reason for all this anxiety, which I cannot relate now. The visit, however, passed off well, and we returned in the dark to Kingston,—I with a lighter heart than I had known since my departure from Eartham,—and Mary too, for she had suffered hardly less than myself, and chiefly on my account. That night we rested well in our inn, and at twenty minutes after eight next morning set off for London; exactly at ten we reached Mr. Rose's door;¹ we drank a dish of chocolate with him, and proceeded, Mr. Rose riding with us as far as St. Albans. From this time we met with no impediment. In the dark, and in a storm, at eight at night, we found ourselves at our own back door. Mrs. Unwin was very near slipping out of the chair in which she was taken from the chaise,

¹ At Rose's Cowper met the Welsh bard Edward Williams. Though Cowper had been much interested by Rose's account of Williams, his spirits failed at the interview. ‘He sat,’ says Southey, ‘at the corner of the fireplace in total silence, and manifested no other interest in the conversation, than occasionally raising his eyes towards the speaker.’

but at last was landed safe. We all have had a good night, and are all well this morning.

God bless you, my dearest brother, W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Saturday, 22 Sept. 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I should not have left you so long without a written notice of our return, had I not found on my arrival several letters that required immediate answers; beside which I have been obliged to write many others, to give our distant friends, and Mr. Hayley in particular, as early an account as possible of the success of our journey.

You have already learned from your kinsman¹ that Mrs. Unwin is come home improved in her health considerably, but she is not yet well enough either to work, or to write, or to walk alone: nor can she even read with any continuance, or read at all except printed characters, and those fair and large. She therefore still wants much of restoration, and there is still much in that particular to be prayed for.

As to myself, I have an inflammation in my eyelid, which makes writing both painful and hurtful to me; and my frame of mind continues such as it was before I went to Eartham, almost always low, and often inexpressibly dejected. My work is still in suspense, or, to say truth, not yet begun; nor do I at present see that I am likely to have any leisure for such labours.—But on this latter I do not ask you to pray, because you have already obtained sufficient assurances concerning it. God

¹ Mr. Eusebius Killingworth.

can enable me to do much in a short time, and that is the only hope I have of ever performing it at all.

With Mrs. Unwin's kind remembrances, — I remain, dr. Sir, yrs.,

W.M. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

22 Sept. 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I should show myself very insensible of your kindness in requesting as early an account as possible of our safe arrival. But an inflammation in my eyelids makes writing both painful and hurtful, and I must therefore be very Laconic. The Barnet chaise was so kind as to serve us even to Woburn. At the 'George' at that place we were presently supplied with others, but so ancient that they might well pass for the prime parents of the whole generation, lined partly with ragged cloth, partly with tattered leather, and having windows perfectly immovable. To that circumstance I am indebted for the disorder of which I have already complained. Johnny in our last stage was seized with a terrible colic occasioned by the beef of Barnet, which, having drunk only a little wine after it, he could by no possibility digest; at last, however, after many contortions and much misery he was enabled to avail himself of the best remedy. No other interruption or disaster befell us, till at eight o'clock we found ourselves at our own door. There indeed when the last inch of our journey was performed, and we thought ourselves perfectly secure, we were threatened with the greatest misadventure of all; for Mrs. Unwin narrowly escaped a

fall from the chair in which she was borne to the ground, not being sufficiently seated. W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON¹

Wednesday [probably September 1792].

DEAR SIR,—I thank you for interesting yourself so much in my feelings on the subject of my translation and the censure passed upon it in the *Monthly Review*. You may assure yourself that it never gave me much concern, and has long since ceased to give me any. It is a flimsy criticism, and proves nothing so clearly as the malevolence and insufficiency of its author. With respect to Milton, I have felt myself a little encouraged by the notice you communicated yesterday, and by another which I received myself this morning. I waked complaining that my *spirit* shrunk from the employment, and was answered in these words :

I pushed *her* to that end, believing her well qualified to reach it.

The words were spoken *more humano*; for what God believes He knows, and I shall soon make trial of their veracity; for next Monday, if not sooner, I purpose to begin my dissertations.

My eyes are somewhat better, but at present not equal to much labour.

Mrs. Unwin has rested well, and is, I hope, in the way of recovery.—Yours truly, W. C.

¹ '1792, Sept. 8.—Mr. Sutcliffe [Baptist minister at Olney] . . . told me of Mr. Cowper being assaulted very roughly by the Reviewer.

'1792, Sept. 22.—I went and dined with the Esq. and found him most affected by the censure of the work.'—Teedon's *Diary*.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Saturday, 29 Sept. 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I thank you for your humorous attack upon Peter,¹ which has amused me as much as I was capable of being amused at the time when I read it. For since I wrote last I have been completely deprived of all the little encouragement to my work that I could gather both from your notices and my own. Other encouragement I have received; but while Mrs. Unwin continues weak as she is, am little the better for any. Uninterrupted leisure is necessary to such studies, and such leisure is to me impossible. If God has spoken, it will be done. The event will soon show, for the time grows short, and makes it necessary to decide.

As to the reviewers,² I determined before I published, that whatever treatment I might receive from them, I would never touch the pen in my own vindication; and am equally resolved that no friend of mine shall ever do it with my consent. They have belied me. The learned will know that they have; but to convince the unlearned of it would be impossible. Therefore let them rest.—I am, dear Sir, yrs.,

Wm. COWPER.

I should not suppose Mr. Whitbread a likely man to interest himself at all on such a subject, or that it would be worth your while to present your verses to him.

¹ Teedon had written verses against Peter Pindar (Dr. John Wolcot), who had published a poem on the *King's Visit to Mr. Whitbread's Brewery*.

² Teedon had evidently desired to vindicate Cowper's Homer against the Reviewers.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, 2 Oct. 1792.

MY DEAR HAYLEY,—A bad night, succeeded by an east wind, and a sky all in sables, have such an effect on my spirits, that if I did not consult my own comfort more than yours, I should not write to-day, for I shall not entertain you much. Yet your letter, though containing no very pleasant tidings, has afforded me some relief. It tells me, indeed, that you have been dispirited yourself, and that poor little Tom,¹ the faithful squire of my Mary, has been seriously indisposed. All this grieves me; but then there is a warmth of heart and a kindness in it, that do me good. I will endeavour not to repay you in notes of sorrow and despondence, though all my sprightly chords seem broken. In truth, one day excepted, I have not seen the day when I have been cheerful, since I left you. My spirits, I think, are almost constantly lower than they were. The approach of winter is perhaps the cause; and if it is, I have nothing better to expect for a long time to come.

Yesterday was a day of assignation with myself, the day of which I said some days before it came, When that day comes I will begin my dissertations. Accordingly when it came I prepared to do so; filled a letter-case with fresh paper, furnished myself with a pretty good pen, and replenished my ink-bottle; but partly from one cause, and partly from another, chiefly however from distress and dejection, after writing and obliterating about six lines, in the

¹ Hayley's son.

composition of which I spent near an hour, I was obliged to relinquish the attempt. An attempt so unsuccessful could have no other effect than to dishearten me; and it has had that effect to such a degree that I know not when I shall find courage to make another. At present I shall certainly abstain, since at present I cannot well afford to expose myself to the danger of a fresh mortification. I am the more concerned for your little man, apprehending that he caught the disorder by which he has suffered so much when he accompanied us in the rain to the bottom of the long hill. Give my love to him and Mary's, and tell him that we are both grieved for it.

I have seen Socket's father since I wrote last, and did not forget what you desired me to say to him,—to caution him, I mean, against a notion that his son's establishment with you would be permanent. He is a sensible man, and as such he thanked me for the admonition, and you for commissioning me to give it him. This morning, immediately after the receipt of yours, I sent a message to his mother informing her that her son was well, but a little grieved at hers and his father's silence. She answered that her husband was gone to town, and that she did not doubt but he had written by this time. They are leaving Weston to settle in London, where Mr. S. has lately got a small appointment, I know not what, and where he intends to resume his former business of stationer and bookseller.

Mrs. Unwin continues much as she was when we left Earham, which I account a wonder, considering the weather we have had ever since we arrived at

home, almost incessant rains. When we reached the borough in our journey we found the water-carts employed to lay the dust. When we came to Barnet the road, to our surprise, was wet; as we advanced we found it rather dirty; before we reached Newport, as foul as in the worst winter, and at Newport there was a flood that the chaise could not pass, and we were obliged to go over the bridge.

I thank you for your very good lines, and very expressive of what I feel when I think of Thurlow and his unreplying sullenness. We are not the only persons whom he has offended in that sort. My cousin of Ham, the General I mean, is mortally angry with him for having treated my late uncle, Lady Hesketh's father, in the same manner. You are happy who are able to write. As for me, I have been endeavouring these six weeks that I might be grateful to Romney,¹ and have not yet put two lines together.

I have had a letter from Hurdis, who is still sad for the loss of his sister. In his epitaph I have made much alteration, but nothing, I perceive (and for the reason you mentioned), will ever make it a good one. He set out for Oxford on Monday last.—Adieu, with Mary's best love to you and your dear boy, and with my Johnny of Norfolk's best complimts., I remain, very good and kind friend,
your affectionate

Wm. COWPER.

I should have dined with the Courtenays to-day but the dumps would not permit.

¹ See Letter to Hayley, 28th October 1792.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Wednesday morning, 3 Oct. 1792.

DEAR SIR,—Could I have sent you anything but complaints, I should have written either yesterday or the day before. But to what end is it that I complain except to distress and discourage you?

I sat down to my work on Monday with a fixed purpose to begin. Determined too not to relinquish it for any slight impediments that might present themselves. But it was in vain. Perpetual and unavoidable interruptions were partly the reason, but much more an absolute inability. My spirits are not good enough nor my mind collected enough for composition of any kind. How should they be so, when I never wake without words that are a poignard in my bosom, and the pain of which I feel all the day—Mrs. Unwin's approaching and sudden death the constant subject of them? In vain I pray to be delivered from these distressing experiences. They are only multiplied upon me the more, and the more pointed.

I feel myself in short the most unpitied, the most unprotected, and the most unacknowledged outcast of the human race.

You now know how it is with me; when it is better you shall know that too, but I expect nothing, or nothing but misery.

Mrs. Unwin is at present as well as usual, perhaps she is even a little better, but the nature of her disorder is such that it keeps me in continual fear. In one moment all may be undone again and I left desolate.—I remain, yrs. truly,

Wm. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Oct. 5th, 1792.

You had a clearer foresight of my occasions than I had myself, when you asked me in the chaise if I should not soon draw for the remaining hundred. In fact, I shall draw for it this very day . . . The farmer who has hitherto supplied us with all dairy-articles finds himself and his old house-keeper too infirm to carry on that business any longer. The consequence is that we must have a dairy of our own. Two cows will be necessary, together with many other items, on the occasion, and thus it is that I am obliged to have recourse to Johnson sooner than I intended. As to myself, I have wanted nothing since my return but better spirits. I feel a languor that I am not able to conquer, and which, together with Mrs. Unwin's present helpless condition, makes all study impossible.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Sunday, 7 October, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I write to you from the same deeps as before, but rather less sensible of being there. Nothing, I mean, has occurred in the course of my experience that has had the least tendency to alter my feelings for the better; but I have lately put myself into a course of bark, as I always do at this season of the year, and generally find some little benefit from it. Time and the pen have been my only remedies for the deepest wounds that ever soul received, these many years; and the pen is now

forbidden me, or, which is the same thing, I am providentially precluded from the use of it.

Mrs. Unwin, I thank God, continues as well as she was, but still her feebleness is a great distress to us both. I do not find that your prayers for her recovery obtain any encouraging answer.—I am, dear Sir, yrs.,

Wm. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON¹

Thursday.

DEAR SIR,—I would willingly send you cheerful tidings if I could, but have none such. My waking time in the morning is now as distressful as before the last manifestation; and I hardly ever fail to open my eyes to the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war.

I would gladly too make another attempt at Milton, but though I cannot convey to you an adequate impression of the disability of which I complain, I feel it myself so sensibly that I know it would be in vain. When He who has promised, or seems to have promised, me His assistance for this purpose, shall be pleased to vouchsafe it, I shall undoubtedly find an alteration in my frame of mind, and outward hindrances, at present unsurmountable, will obstruct no longer.

Mrs. Unwin, except that she suffers by the east wind, is much as when you saw her.—I am, dr. Sir,
sincerely yours,

Wm. COWPER.

I recd. your note last night.

¹ Written perhaps in the autumn of 1792 after Cowper's return from Earham.—John Johnson.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, Oct. 13, 1792.

I BEGAN a letter to you yesterday, my dearest brother, and proceeded through two sides of the sheet; but so much of my nervous fever found its way into it, that, looking it over this morning I determined not to send it.

I have risen, though not in good spirits, yet in better than I generally do of late, and therefore will not address you in the melancholy tone that belongs to my worst feelings.

I began to be restless about your portrait, and to say, How long shall I have to wait for it? I wished it here for many reasons: the sight of it will be a comfort to me, for I not only love, but am proud of you, as of a conquest made in my old age. Johnny goes to town on Monday, on purpose to call on Romney, to whom he shall give all proper information concerning its conveyance hither. The name of a man, whom I esteem as I do Romney, ought not to be unmusical in my ears; but his name will be so, till I shall have paid him a debt justly due to him, by doing such poetical honours to it as I intend. Heaven knows when that intention will be executed, for the Muse is still as obdurate and as coy as ever.

Your kind postscript is just arrived, and gives me great pleasure. When I cannot see you myself, it seems some comfort, however, that you have been seen by another known to me; and who will tell me in a few days that he has seen you. Your wishes to disperse my melancholy would, I am sure,

prevail, did that event depend on the warmth and sincerity with which you frame them: but it has baffled both wishes and prayers, and those the most fervent that could be made, so many years, that the case seems hopeless. But no more of this at present.

Your verses to Austin¹ are as sweet as the honey that they accompany;—kind, friendly, witty, and elegant. When shall I be able to do the like? Perhaps when my Mary, like your Tom, shall cease to be an invalid, I may recover a power at least to do something. I sincerely rejoice in the dear little man's restoration. My Mary continues, I hope, to mend a little.

As you proceed in your *Life of Milton*, you still find occasion, no doubt, to censure and expose the cruelty of that literary cossack's strictures.² I do sincerely rejoice that Prussia and Austria seem baffled.³ If ever they depart from France, they will return no more. She will have leisure to settle herself in the winter, and will be too formidable thenceforth to tempt invaders.

W. C.

TO MRS. KING

Oct. 14, 1792.

MY DEAR MADAM,—Your kind inquiries after mine and Mrs. Unwin's health will not permit me to be silent, though I am and have long been so indisposed to writing, that even a letter has almost overtasked me.

¹ Dr. Austin. See Letters of 11th June 1792 and 29th January 1793.

² Dr. Johnson. See vol. i. 164, and vol. ii. 179.

³ The united armies of Prussia and Austria under the Duke of Brunswick were driven back by the French under Dumouriez, who retook Verdun on October 12th.

Your last but one found me on the point of setting out for Sussex, whither I went with Mrs. Unwin, on a visit to my friend Mr. Hayley. We spent six weeks at Earham, and returned on the 20th of September. I had hopes that change of air and change of scene might be serviceable both to my poor invalid and me. She, I hope, has received some benefit; and I am not the worse for it myself; but, at the same time, must acknowledge that I cannot boast of much amendment. The time we spent there could not fail to pass as agreeably as her weakness, and my spirits, at a low ebb, would permit. Hayley is one of the most agreeable men, as well as one of the most cordial friends. His house is elegant; his library large, and well chosen; and he is surrounded by the most delightful scenery. But I have made the experiment only to prove, what indeed I knew before, that creatures are physicians of little value, and that health and cure are from God only. Henceforth, therefore, I shall wait for those blessings from Him, and expect them at no other hand. In the mean time, I have the comfort to be able to tell you that Mrs. Unwin, on the whole, is restored beyond the most sanguine expectations I had when I wrote last; and that, as to myself, it is not much otherwise with me than it has been these twenty years; except that this season of the year is always unfavourable to my spirits.

I rejoice that you have had the pleasure of another interview with Mr. Martyn; and am glad that the trifles I have sent you afforded him any amusement. This letter has already given you to understand that I am at present no artificer of verse, and that, consequently, I have nothing new to communicate.

When I have, I shall do it to none more readily than to yourself.—My dear Madam, very affectionately yours,

W. C.¹

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Tuesday, 16th October, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—On Saturday you saw me a little better than I had been when I wrote last ; but the night following brought with it an uncommon deluge of distress, such as entirely overwhelmed and astonished me. My terrors were not to be described. But on Sunday while I walked with Mrs. Unwin and my cousin in the orchard, it pleased God to enable me once more to approach Him in prayer, and I prayed silently for everything that lay nearest my heart with a comfortable degree of liberty. Nor did I let slip the occasion of praying for you.

This experience I take to be a fulfilment of those words :—

‘The ear of the Lord is open to them that fear him, and he will hear their cry.’

The next morning, at my waking, I heard these :—

‘Fulfil thy promise to me.’

And ever since I was favoured with the spiritual freedom to make my requests known to God, I have enjoyed some quiet, though not uninterrupted by threatenings of the enemy.

¹ This is the last of Cowper's letters to Mrs. King. She died on 6th February 1793. Professor Martyn thus recorded the event in his diary : ‘In the evening died my excellent friend, the eminently pious Margaret, above forty years wife to my cousin, the Rev. John King, having supported a long and painful sickness with exemplary patience and resignation, in the fifty-eighth year of her age.’

Mrs. Unwin has had a good night, and is in tolerable spirits this morning.

Adieu—I am yours sincerely,

W.M. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

Oct. 18, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I thought that the wonder had been all on my side, having been employed in wondering at your silence, as long as you at mine. Soon after our arrival at Earham, I received a letter from you, which I answered, if not by return of post, at least in a day or two. Not that I should have insisted on the ceremonial of letter for letter, during so long a period, could I have found leisure to double your debt; but while there, I had no opportunity for writing, except now and then a short one; for we breakfasted early, studied Milton as soon as breakfast was over, and continued in that employment till Mrs. Unwin came forth from her chamber, to whom all the rest of my time was necessarily devoted. Our return to Weston was on the 19th of last month, according to your information. You will naturally think that, in the interval, I must have had sufficient leisure to give you notice of our safe arrival. But the fact has been otherwise. I have neither been well myself, nor has Mrs. Unwin, though better, so much improved in her health, as not still to require my continual assistance. My disorder has been the old one, to which I have been subject so many years, and especially about this season,—a nervous fever; not, indeed, so oppressive as it has sometimes

proved, but sufficiently alarming both to Mrs. Unwin and myself, and such as made it neither easy nor proper for me to make much use of my pen while it continued. At present I am tolerably free from it,—a blessing for which I believe myself partly indebted to the use of James's powder, in small quantities; and partly to a small quantity of laudanum, taken every night; but chiefly to a manifestation of God's presence vouchsafed to me a few days since; transient, indeed, and dimly seen, through a mist of many fears and troubles, but sufficient to convince me, at least while the enemy's power is a little restrained, that He has not cast me off for ever.

Our visit was a pleasant one,—as pleasant as Mrs. Unwin's weakness, and the state of my spirits, never very good, would allow. As to my own health, I never expected that it would be much improved by the journey: nor have I found it so. Some benefit, indeed, I hoped, and perhaps a little more than I found. But the season was, after the first fortnight, extremely unfavourable,—stormy and wet; and the prospects, though grand and magnificent, yet rather of a melancholy cast, and consequently not very propitious to me. The cultivated appearance of Weston suits my frame of mind far better than wild hills that aspire to be mountains, covered with vast unfrequented woods, and here and there affording a peep between their summits at the distant ocean. Within doors all was hospitality and kindness, but the scenery *would* have its effect; and though delightful in the extreme to those who had spirits to bear it, was too gloomy for me.

Mrs. Unwin performed the journey, both going and returning, better than I had hoped she could.

With an arm to lean upon she walks pretty well, though still with a step that totters when she turns; neither can she yet read without poring more than is good for her, or use her needles. But her looks are greatly improved, and her speech, especially in the earlier part of the day, is as strong and articulate as ever.

We are glad that the ducks arrived safe. A couple were likewise sent a little before our departure for Sussex, which we hope arrived safe also. I must now to breakfast; and with Mrs. Unwin's affectionate remembrances and thanks for your kind mention of her in your letter, conclude myself yours, my dear friend, most sincerely,

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON

Weston, Oct. 19, 1792.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,—You are too useful when you are here not to be missed on a hundred occasions daily; and too much domesticated with us not to be regretted always. I hope, therefore, that your month or six weeks will not be like many that I have known,—capable of being drawn out into any length whatever, and productive of nothing but disappointment.

I have done nothing since you went, except that I have composed the better half of a sonnet to Romney;¹ yet even this ought to bear an earlier date, for I began to be haunted with a desire to do it long before we came out of Sussex, and have daily attempted it ever since.

It would be well for the reading part of the world, if the writing part were, many of them, as dull as I

¹ ‘Romney, expert infallibly to trace,’ etc. See *Globe Ed.* p. 387.

am. Yet even this small produce, which my sterile intellect has hardly yielded at last, may serve to convince you that in point of spirits I am not worse.

In fact, I am a little better. The powders and the laudanum together have, for the present at least, abated the fever that consumes them ; and in measure as the fever abates, I acquire a less discouraging view of things, and with it a little power to exert myself.

In the evenings I read Baker's *Chronicle*¹ to Mrs. Unwin, having no other history, and hope in time to be as well versed in it as his admirer Sir Roger de Coverley.

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON

Weston, Oct. 22, 1792.

MY DEAR JOHNNY,—Here am I with I know not how many letters to answer, and no time to do it in. I exhort you, therefore, to set a proper value on this, as proving your priority in my attentions, though in other respects likely to be of little value.

You do well to sit for your picture, and give very sufficient reasons for doing it ; you will also, I doubt not, take care that when future generations shall look at it, some spectator or other shall say, This is the picture of a good man, and a useful one.

And now God bless you, my dear Johnny. I proceed much after the old rate ; rising cheerless and distressed in the morning, and brightening a little as the day goes on.—Adieu !

W. C.

¹ Sir Richard Baker (1568-1645), author of the *Chronicle of the Kings of England*. This work is four times referred to in the *Spectator* in connection with Sir Roger de Coverley, who was 'busy all one summer upon it,' and quoted it 'several times in his disputes with Sir Andrew Freeport.'

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Monday, October 22, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—In this world, at least with me, evil is abiding and good transient. I have had distressing times and not few, since the comfortable experience of yesterday se'nnight, and in one instance it has been so depreciated in my view, that I was able to build nothing upon it, but rather perverted it to my greater discomfiture. At present, however, I am in tolerable spirits, and I should have better, if the work enjoined me were not altogether at a stand. The non-performance of it is a burthen that always depresses me, and how to perform it I find not: neither can I reconcile a providential deprivation of the means with a providential call to the undertaking. It is certain that Mrs. Unwin continuing helpless as she is, the thing is impracticable.

If the weather will permit, we shall be glad of your company at dinner to-day at four o'clock. Willm. Kitchener¹ is here, and will attend you home. But we leave you entirely at your option, and if you had rather wait till the weather become more settled and the ways more passable, do so.—

I am, sincerely yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON²

Friday morning.

DEAR SIR,—I am not well, but far from being so. I wake almost constantly under the influence of a nervous fever; by which my spirits are

¹ Cowper's gardener: 'Kitch.'

² No date, but placed here by John Johnson.

affected to such a degree that the oppression is almost insupportable. Since I wrote last I have been plunged in deeps, unvisited, I am convinced, by any human soul but mine; and though the day in its progress bears away with it some part of this melancholy, I am never cheerful, because I can never hope, and am so bounded in my prospects, that to look forward to another year to me seems madness.

In this state of mind how can I write? It is in vain to attempt it. I have neither spirits for it, as I have often said, nor leisure. Yet vain as I know the attempt must prove, I purpose in a few days to renew it.

Mrs. Unwin is as well as when I wrote last, but, like myself, dejected. Dejected both on my account and on her own. Unable to amuse herself either with work or reading, she looks forward to a new day with despondence, weary of it before it begins, and longing for the return of night.

Thus it is with us both. If I endeavour to pray, I get my answer in a double portion of misery. My petitions, therefore, are reduced to three words, and those not very often repeated—‘God have mercy!’ —Adieu! Yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, Oct. 28, 1792.

NOTHING done, my dearest brother, nor likely to be done at present; yet I purpose in a day or two to make another attempt, to which however I shall address myself with fear and trembling, like a man who, having sprained his wrist, dreads to use it. I have not indeed, like such a man, injured myself by

any extraordinary exertion, but seem as much enfeebled as if I had. The consciousness that there is so much to do and nothing done, is a burthen I am not able to bear. Milton especially is my grievance, and I might almost as well be haunted by his ghost, as goaded with such continual reproaches for neglecting him. I will therefore begin; I will do my best; and if, after all, that best prove good for nothing, I will even send the notes, worthless as they are, that I have made already; a measure very disagreeable to myself, and to which nothing but necessity shall compel me. I shall rejoice to see those new samples of your biography, which you give me to expect.

Allons! Courage!—Here comes something however,—produced after a gestation as long as that of a pregnant woman. It is the debt long unpaid; the compliment due to Romney; and if it has your approbation I will send it, or you may send it for me. I must premise, however, that I intended nothing less than a sonnet when I began. I know not why, but I said to myself it shall not be a sonnet; accordingly I attempted it in one sort of measure, then in a second, then in a third, till I had made the trial in half a dozen different kinds of shorter verse, and behold it is a sonnet at last. The Fates would have it so.¹

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

2 Nov. 1792.

DEAR SIR,—You send me much that might refresh and encourage me—but nothing that does.

¹ In a lost fragment of this letter Cowper also says: ‘I am a pitiful beast, and in the texture of my mind and natural temper have three threads of despondency for one of hope.’

The power with which the words are accompanied to you, is not exerted in my favour. But I endeavour to hold by them, having nothing else to hold by. My nocturnal and morning experiences are such as they have long been; all my sleep is troubled, and when I wake, I am absorbed in terror. This morning I said to myself, soon after waking, ‘God alone knows how much better it would have been for me never to have been born !’¹ My best times are the afternoon and evening; not because I am more spiritual, or have more hope, at these times than at others, but merely because the animal has been recruited by eating and drinking.

Mrs. Unwin, except that she has slept but indifferently of late, goes on well; seems to have a little increasing strength continually.

You have remembered, I trust, to desire Mr. Killingworth² to make me another letter-book.—With Mrs. Unwin’s compliments, I remain, with my best thanks for your pious remembrances and prayers, sincerely yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOHN JOHNSON

Nov. 5, 1792.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,—Have done nothing since you went, except that I have finished the Sonnet which I told you I had begun, and sent it to Hayley, who is well pleased *therewith*, and has by this time transmitted it to whom it most concerns.

I would not give the algebraist sixpence for his

¹ ‘1792, Nov. 4.—I went after dinner to Madm. ; met the Esqr., who gave a most dreadful account of the state of his mind.’—*Teedon’s Diary*.

² Eusebius Killingworth, who assisted Teedon in his school at Olney, was an amateur bookbinder.

encomiums on my *Task*, if he condemns my Homer, which I know in point of language is equal to it, and in variety of numbers superior. But the character of the former having been some years established, he follows the general cry; and should Homer establish himself as well, and I trust he will hereafter, I shall have his warm suffrage for that also. But if not—it is no matter. Swift says somewhere,—There are a few good judges of poetry in the world, who lend their taste to those who have none: and your man of figures is probably one of the borrowers.—Adieu—in great haste. Our united love attends yourself and yours, whose I am, most truly and affectionately,

W.M. COWPER.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY¹

7 Nov. 1792.

DIVINES have observed, that as our first father Adam sinned with his teeth, so they are the part of us that first decays, and in which we sooner suffer excruciating pain than any other. W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

7 Nov. 1792.

DEAR SIR,—By this time you no doubt expect a note from me, and I write for that reason only, not because I have any thing new to communicate. Nothing in the shape of alleviation has occurred since I saw you. The notice you sent me may indeed be excepted, for though it came unaccompanied with the effect, it certainly has the appearance of it. My spirits this morning are in some small

¹ Tom Hayley had been having a tooth out.

degree better than usual, the wasps and hornets having been less busy about me at the time of waking than they generally are; but my views and prospects continue the same, and I see at present not a shadow of hope that I shall ever find opportunity to proceed with Milton. This is a great trouble to me, and a constant burthen upon my spirits, which, added to Mrs. Unwin's distressing weakness (for such it is to her, and therefore to me), is as heavy as I well know how to bear.—I am, dr. Sir, sincerely yours,

Wm. Cowper.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

Weston Underwood, Nov. 8, 1792.

MY journey to Sussex was not, as you suppose, a poetical journey; for Orpheus himself would never have succeeded in an attempt to draw me so far from home. But it was a journey of obligation. Hayley was here when Mrs. Unwin was taken ill, and discovered on that occasion so much affectionate attention both to her and to me, and seemed to take such an uncommon interest in us both, that when he earnestly invited us to Earham, on a supposition of her recovery, it was impossible not to comply. We promised accordingly, and accordingly we went. What his book may be I know not; but this I know, that men are seldom either so good or so bad as their books represent them; and I learn likewise that if his book furnishes ground to suspect him of a bad heart, it does him great injustice, for a more friendly one, or more under the constant influence of human kindness, dwells not in human bosom.

Obligation, however, was not the sole motive of

my journey. His place is not very distant from the sea, and I had hopes that the air of such a country might be peculiarly beneficial to Mrs. Unwin. The hope was not altogether frustrated, nor was it indeed fulfilled to the extent that I wished. She is returned considerably improved in her health, but by no means so well as before her last indisposition seized her, not being able yet to rise from her seat, or to walk without assistance.

As for myself, I have not been so well these many months as when you saw me. My spirits have been more depressed than is common, even with me; and the winter now beginning threatens me that I shall not soon be better. But cheerful or sad, and whether you are jealous or not, I am always sincerely and affectionately yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Weston, Sept. 9, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I wish that I were as industrious, and as much occupied as you, though in a different way; but it is not so with me. Mrs. Unwin's great debility (who is not yet able to move without assistance), is of itself a hindrance such as would effectually disable me. Till she can work and read, and fill up her time as usual (all which is at present entirely out of her power), I may now and then find time to write a letter, but I shall write nothing more. I cannot sit with my pen in my hand, and my books before me, while she is in effect in solitude, silent, and looking at the fire. To this hindrance that other has been added, of which you

are already aware,—a want of spirits, such as I have never known, when I was not absolutely laid by, since I commenced an author. How long I shall be continued in these uncomfortable circumstances is known only to Him who, as He will, disposes of us all. But, while they last, they make me wish daily that I had found resolution enough to abide by my first purpose, and that, having once peremptorily refused to engage for Milton, I had never afterwards consented. I may be yet able, perhaps, to prepare the first book of the *Paradise Lost* for the press, before it will be wanted; and Johnson himself seems to think there will be no haste for the second. But poetry is my favourite employment, and all my poetical operations are in the mean time suspended; for while a work to which I have bound myself remains unaccomplished I can do nothing else.

Johnson's plan of prefixing my phiz to the new edition of my Poems is by no means a pleasant one to me, and so I told him in a letter I sent him from Earham, in which I assured him that my objections to it would not be easily surmounted. But if you judge that it may really have an effect in advancing the sale, I would not be so squeamish as to suffer the spirit of prudery to prevail in me to his disadvantage. Somebody told an author, I forget whom, that there was more vanity in refusing his picture than in granting it; on which he instantly complied. I do not perfectly feel all the force of the argument, but it shall content me that he did.

I do most sincerely rejoice in the success of your publication, and have no doubt that my prophecy concerning your success in greater matters will be

fulfilled. We are naturally pleased when our friends approve what we approve ourselves; how much then must I be pleased, when you speak so kindly of Johnny! I know him to be all that you think him, and love him entirely.

Adieu! We expect you at Christmas, and shall therefore rejoice when Christmas comes. Let nothing interfere.—Ever yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

Nov. 11, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am not so insensible of your kindness in making me an exception from the number of your correspondents, to whom you forbid the hope of hearing from you till your present labours are ended, as to make you wait longer for an answer to your last; which, indeed, would have had its answer before this time, had it been possible for me to write. But so many have demands upon me of a similar kind, and while Mrs. Unwin continues an invalid, my opportunities of writing are so few, that I am constrained to incur a long arrear to some, with whom I would wish to be punctual. She can at present neither work nor read; and till she can do both, and amuse herself as usual, my own amusements of the pen must be suspended.

I, like you, have a work before me, and a work to which I should be glad to address myself in earnest, but cannot do it at present. When the opportunity comes, I shall, like you, be under a necessity of interdicting some of my usual correspondents, and of shortening my letters to the ex-

cepted few. Many letters and much company are incompatible with authorship, and the one as much as the other. It will be long, I hope, before the world is put in possession of a publication, which you design should be posthumous.

Oh for the day when your expectations of my complete deliverance shall be verified! At present it seems very remote: so distant indeed that hardly the faintest streak of it is visible in my horizon. The glimpse with which I was favoured about a month since, has never been repeated; and the depression of my spirits has. The future appears gloomy as ever; and I seem to myself to be scrambling always in the dark, among rocks and precipices, without a guide, but with an enemy ever at my heels, prepared to push me headlong.¹ Thus I have spent twenty years, but thus I shall not spend twenty years more. Long ere that period arrives, the grand question concerning my everlasting weal or woe will be decided. A question that seems to have interested the enemy of mankind peculiarly, for against none, so far as I have learned by reading or otherwise, has he ever manifested such fury as I have experienced at his hands; yet all that I have felt is little in comparison with what he often threatens me, so that even God's omnipotence to save is a consideration that affords me no comfort, while I seem to have a foe omnipotent to destroy. This may appear to you a strange language, yet is it not altogether unwarranted by Scripture. Tell me who are the Principalities and Powers in heavenly

¹ ‘1792, Nov. 11.—I went to the Esqr.; advised seven days prayer morn and eve from the example of Elijah.’—*Teedon’s Diary*.

places spoken of by Saint Paul? Against them we have to war; and they cannot be the angels who have fallen from their first estate, for they are said to have been long since thrust down into perdition, and to be bound in chains of darkness until the judgment of the great day. I recollect, and so do you perhaps, what was the opinion of Dr. Conyers¹ on this subject, and it will be a pleasure to me to know yours. If my enemy's testimony could weigh with you as much as it does sometimes with me, you would not hesitate long in your answer, for he has a thousand times in my hearing boasted himself supreme.

Adieu, my dear friend, I have exhausted my time though not filled my paper. Our united thanks are due for some excellent skait, and with our united affectionate remembrances to yourself and Miss Catlett,—I remain, truly yours, Wm. COWPER.

I enclose Nat's² receipt. The fourpence purchased a loaf for a hungry pauper.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Nov. 13, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I must answer your last two letters together.

It has always been my purpose, if I could do it no better, to send to the press such notes on the first and second books of the *Paradise Lost* as I have already made. But nothing shall constrain me to this except absolute necessity; and for several

¹ Dr. Richard Conyers of Helmsley. See vol. i. p. 95.

² Nat Gee the Knacker.

reasons. First. The splendour of the edition requires that the page should be clear and unincumbered, at least, as much as possible. Secondly. Almost all that can be done in the way of notes has been done already, and by very able hands. And Thirdly. It is impossible in notes to do justice to the doctrinal passages, which is the most important consideration of all.

But what is my hope that I shall ever execute my intentions? Truly a leaf driven by the wind of a thousand tempests. The fever on my spirits, from which, except in the heat of the first part of August, I have hardly been free this half year, still continues, and distressed me more last night than at any period in all that time. I waked very often, and always after waking was almost bent double with misery. Yet in one of my short sleeps I dreamed that I had God's presence in a slight measure, and exclaimed under the impression of it:—
I know that Thou art infinitely gracious, but what will become of *me*?

This fever keeps me always in terror, for it has ever been the harbinger of my worst indispositions. As to prayer, the very collects you mention have been the prayers that I have generally used, when I have felt the least encouragement to pray at all.—But I may add, never with any sensible effect. In compliance, however, with your call to that service, I will use them again, and be careful not to omit them at least till the time you mention is expired. Yet if faith is necessary to effectuate prayer, alas! what chance have mine?

Mrs. Unwin has had a pretty good night, and

seems pure well this morning.—I remain, dear Sir,
sincerely yours,

W.M. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Nov. 17 [1792 ?].

DEAR SIR,—To avoid constant repetition of the same complaints, which is tiresome even to myself, I shall give you my intelligence, I believe, for the future in the form of a journal. On the night of Tuesday the 13th, I entered on the practice recommended by you, and used the Evening collect paraphrasing it a little, and instead of *perils* and *dangers*, which are the same thing, praying to be delivered from all perils and *terrors*. That night my sleep was frequently broken but not much disturbed. In the morning, I used the proper Collect, omitting, to the best of my remembrance, the word *safely*, because it seems to me that whosoever has lost all his evidences and all his hopes, cannot justly be said to have been brought safely on. Wednesday was a day of no particular mark; I was only stupid and melancholy as I always am. Wednesday night was much like the night preceding, and Thursday much such another day as Wednesday.

Friday, Nov. 16.—I have had a terrible night—such a one as I believe I may say God knows no man ever had. Dreamed that in a state of the most insupportable misery I looked through the window of a strange room being all alone, and saw preparations making for my execution. That it was but about four days distant, and that then I was destined to suffer everlasting martyrdom in the fire, my body being prepared for the purpose and my dissolution

made a thing impossible. Rose overwhelmed with infinite despair, and came down into the study, execrating the day when I was born with inexpressible bitterness. And while I write this, I repeat those execrations, in my very soul persuaded that I shall perish miserably and as no man ever did. Every thing is, and for twenty years has been, lawful to the enemy against me.

Such was Friday morning, and the rest of the day, especially the evening, unfit for description.

Saturday 17.—Had much less sleep than usual, but the sleep I had was quiet. Terror turns to wrath, wrath prompts unadvised speech, unadvised speech brings guilt, and guilt terror again. In this circle I have moved, and all my waking hours in the night and my rising in the morning have been miserable accordingly. It is now past ten in the forenoon, and I seem settling into a calm habitual melancholy, which is the happiest frame of mind I ever know.

TO JOHN JOHNSON

Weston, Nov. 20, 1792.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,—I give you many thanks for your rhymes, and for your verses without rhyme; for your poetical dialogue between wood and stone; between Homer's head and the head of Samuel; kindly intended, I know well, for my amusement, and that amused me much.

The successor of the clerk defunct, for whom I used to write mortuary verses, arrived here this morning, with a recommendatory letter from Joe Rye, and an humble petition of his own, entreating

me to assist him as I had assisted his predecessor. I have undertaken the service, although with no little reluctance, being involved in many arrears on other subjects, and having very little dependence at present on my ability to write at all. I proceed exactly as when you were here—a letter now and then before breakfast, and the rest of my time all holiday; if holiday it may be called, that is spent chiefly in moping and musing, and '*forecasting the fashion of uncertain evils.*'

The fever on my spirits has harassed me much, and I have never had so good a night, nor so quiet a rising, since you went, as on this very morning. A relief that I account particularly seasonable and propitious, because I had, in my intentions, devoted this morning to you, and could not have fulfilled those intentions, had I been as spiritless as I generally am.

I am glad that Johnson is in no haste for Milton, for I seem myself not likely to address myself presently to that concern, with any prospect of success; yet something now and then, like a secret whisper, assures and encourages me that it will yet be done.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

DEAR SIR,—It is fit that you should know the good as well as the evil, and with what measure of success your advice and my conformity to it have been attended. I heard these words this morning on first waking:—

‘Who is this who lifts up his eyes to heaven?’

I then still slept, and dreamed that I prayed as follows :—

‘O Lord God have mercy on me for I am very poor and in misery. Indeed I am.’

In the study I afterwards prayed according to your prescription, and had in my prayer a momentary glimpse of God’s presence.—Yours sincerely,

W.M. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Wednesday, 21 Nov. 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I have now persevered in the punctual performance of the duty of prayer¹ as long, and I believe longer than the time which you specified. Whether any beneficial effect has followed, I cannot say. My wakings in the night have certainly been somewhat less painful and terrible than they were, but this I cannot help ascribing to the agency of an anodyne which I have constantly used lately at bed time. Of one thing, however, I am sure, which is, that I have had no spiritual anodyne vouchsafed to *me*. My nights having been somewhat less disturbed, my days have of course been such likewise; but a settled melancholy overclouds them all; nothing cheers me, nothing inspires me with hope. It is even miraculous in my own eyes that, always occupied as I am in the contemplation of the most distressing subjects, I am not absolutely incapacitated for the common affairs of life.

My purpose is to continue such prayer as I can make, although with all this reason to conclude that

¹ See letter of November 17th.

it is not accepted, and though I have been more than once forbidden, in my own apprehension, by Him to whom it is addressed. You will tell me, that God never forbids any body to pray, but on the contrary, encourages all to do it. I answer—No. Some He does not encourage, and some He even forbids; not by words perhaps, but by a secret negative found only in their experience.

Adieu!—Mrs. Unwin continues much as she was, and would be better if I were so.—Yours sincerely,
W.M. COWPER.¹

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, Sunday, Nov. 25, 1792.

MY DEAREST HAYLEY,—The desired picture comes not, though I have heard from Johnny since I wrote last that he called on Romney, as he was commissioned to do so, and gave him all necessary directions. Romney I know is neither idle nor unmindful where you are at all concerned, and perhaps he would not forget you or even me, but he has little leisure, and therefore I must have more patience.

Achilles and Hector and Homer and all
When your face appears shall come down from the wall,
And mine, theme of many an angry remark,
Shall then hide its pick-pocket looks in the dark.

How shall I thank you enough for the interest you take in my future Miltonic labours, and the assistance you promise me in the performance of

¹ '1792, Nov. 21.—I received a letter from the Esquire telling me he had eventually complied with my requisition but found little or no relief, but would keep to it as well as he could. I wrote the dream of Lion's den and his deliverance.'—*Teedon's Diary*.

them? I will some time or other, if I live, and live a poet, acknowledge your friendship in some of my best verse; the most suitable return one poet can make to another; in the mean time, I love you, and am sensible of all your kindness.

An author so liberal deserves a liberal bookseller, and I rejoice that you have found one. Mine, too, is I believe of that character, but he is an idle rogue. He knows I have no books, and yet has sent me none. My reason for accounting him liberal, for I have not always been clear on that point, has occurred lately. My cousin spent an evening with him, when he was in town on his way home, and in the course of their conversation learned from him that he desires a new edition of my poems that shall sort with the new one of Homer, and to present me with the profits of it. I told you once on a time that he is proprietor by gift of those two volumes—he took the hazard of their failure or success upon himself—and is therefore under no obligation to admit me to a share of the advantage.

You wish me warm in my work, and I ardently wish the same; but when I shall be so, God only knows. My melancholy, which seemed a little alleviated for a few days, has gathered about me again, with as black a cloud as ever; the consequence is absolute incapacity to begin.

The first book of the *Paradise Lost* is in truth so terrible and so nearly akin to my miserable speculations on the subject of it, that I am a little apprehensive, unless my spirits were better, that the study of it might do me material harm. If it is to be the will of God that I should ever labour in that field of fire and brimstone He will doubtless give

me a frame of mind, and in a proper time too, that shall fortify me to endure the strain of it. There is no haste, as I understand Johnson talked much when Johnny was with him of the difficulty of procuring artists and of fixing them, when procured, to our business only, and did not seem even to hope that their part would soon be ready. This is not a reason for wilful delay, but it is comfort under delay that is necessary.

I doubt not that when I see any of the Chester family I shall be able to get the *Fall of Innocence*, and the expectation of soon seeing some of them has prevented my ordering it from London. I abominate Nat. Lee¹ for his unjust compliment to Dryden so much at the expense of a much greater poet. But the world had hardly taste enough in those days to relish Milton, and if Nat was a Goth in that particular, Dryden was as much a Goth as he, so I have both condemned and excused him in the same breath.

I was for some years dirge writer to the town of Northampton, being employed by the clerk of the principal parish there, to furnish him with an annual copy of verses proper to be printed at the foot of his Bill of Mortality; but the clerk died, and hearing nothing for two years from his successor, I well hoped that I was out of my office.² The other morning, however, while I was shaving myself, Sam announced the new clerk; he came to solicit the same service as I had rendered his predecessor, and I reluctantly complied; doubtful, indeed, whether

¹ Nathaniel Lee, dramatist (1655-1692). He assisted Dryden in the composition of *The Duke of Guise*.

² Hence there is no Mortuary poem for 1791.

I was capable. I have however achieved that labour, and I have done nothing more. I am just sent for up to Mary, dear Mary ! Adieu ! she is as well as when I left you, I would I could say better. Remember us both affectionately to your sweet boy, and trust me for being,—Most truly yours,

W. C.

P.S.—Socket is never forgot.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

28th Nov. 1792.

DEAR SIR,—Since I wrote last, my experience has held the same tenor of despair, despondence, and dejection; but having had a quiet night, my spirits are a little raised this morning. My nights indeed have lately been less infested with horrid dreams and wakings, and I would willingly hope that it is an answer to the prayers I offer, lifeless as they are. I shall not discontinue the practice, you may be sure, so long as I have even this encouragement to observe it.

Two or three nights since I dreamed that I had God's presence largely, and seemed to pray with much liberty. I then proceeded dreaming about many other things, all vain and foolish; but at last I dreamed that, recollecting my pleasant dream, I congratulated myself on the exact recollection that I had of my prayer, and of all that passed in it. But when I waked, not a single word could I remember. These words were however very audibly spoken to me in the moment of waking,

Sacrum est quod dixi.

It seems strange that I should be made to felicitate myself on remembering what in reality it was designed that I should not remember ; for the single circumstance that my heart had been enlarged was all that remained with me.

I thank you for sending your last notice immediately after you received it. It came very seasonably, when it was much wanted ; not that any single word of all that are given you is ever sealed to me, but simple water is a cordial to a person fainting.

Mrs. U. has had a good night, and is cheerful this morning. She unites with me in kind remembrances.—I am, dr. Sir, sincerely yours,

W.M. COWPER.

P.S.—When I see you next, don't let me forget to pay you what I owe Mr. Killingworth for new covering the Road Book.

TO LADY HESKETH

Dec. 1, 1792.

I am truly glad, my dearest coz, that the waters of Cheltenham have done thee good, and wish ardently that those of Bath may establish thy health, and prove the means of prolonging it many years, even till thou shalt become what thou wast called at a very early age, an old wench indeed. I have been a *pauvre misérable* ever since I came from Earham, and was little better while there, so that whatever motive may incline me to travel again hereafter, it will not be the hope that my spirits will be much the better for it. Neither was Mrs. Unwin's health so much improved by that frisk of ours into Sussex, as I had hoped and expected. She

is, however, tolerably well, but very far indeed from having recovered the effects of her last disorder.

My birthday (the sixty-first that I have numbered) has proved for once a propitious day to me, for on that day my spirits began to mend, my nights became less hideous, and my days have been such of course.

I have heard nothing from Joseph,¹ and having been always used to hear from him in November, am reduced to the dire necessity of supposing with you that he is heinously offended. Being in want of money, however, I wrote to him yesterday, and a letter which ought to produce a friendly answer; but whether it will or not is an affair, at present, of great uncertainty. Walter Bagot is offended too, and wonders that I would have any connection with so bad a man as the author² of the *Essay on Old Maids* must necessarily be! Poor man! he has five sisters, I think, in that predicament, which makes *his* resentment rather excusable. Joseph, by the way, has two,³ and perhaps may be proportionally influenced by that consideration. Should that be the case, I have nothing left to do but to wish them all good husbands, since the reconciliation of my two friends seems closely connected with that contingency.

In making the first advances to your sister you have acted like yourself, that is to say like a good and affectionate sister, and will not, I hope, lose your reward. Rewarded in another world you will be, no doubt, but I should hope that you will be not

¹ Hill.

² Hayley.

³ Theodosia and Frances. They are the 'Modern Antiques' of Miss Mitford's *Our Village*.

altogether unrecompensed in this. 'Thou hast a heart, I know, that cannot endure to be long at enmity with any one, and were I capable of using thee never so ill, I am sure that in time you would sue to me for a pardon. Thou dost not want fire, but meekness is predominant in thee.'

I was never so idle in my life, and never had so much to do. God knows when this will end, but I think of bestirring myself soon, and of putting on my Miltonic trammels once again. That once done, I shall not, I hope, put them off till the work is finished. I have written nothing lately but a sonnet to Romney, and a mortuary copy of verses¹ for the town of Northampton, having been applied to by the new clerk for that purpose.

Johnson designs handsomely; you must pardon Johnson, and receive him into your best graces. He purposes to publish, together with my Homer, a new edition of my two volumes of Poems, and to make me a present of the entire profits. They are to be handsome quartos, with an engraving of Abbot's picture of me prefixed. I have left myself neither time nor room for politics.

The French are a vain and childish people, and conduct themselves on this grand occasion with a levity and extravagance nearly akin to madness; but it would have been better for Austria and Prussia to let them alone. All nations have a right to choose their own mode of government, and the sovereignty of the people is a doctrine that evinces itself; for whenever the people choose to be masters they always are so, and none can

¹ 'Thankless for favours from on high.'

See *Globe Ed.* p. 368.

hinder them. God grant that we may have no revolution here, but unless we have a reform, we certainly shall. Depend upon it, my dear, the hour is come when power founded in patronage and corrupt majorities must govern this land no longer. Concessions too must be made to dissenters of every denomination. They have a right to them, a right to all the privileges of Englishmen, and sooner or later, by fair means or by force, they will have them.

Adieu, my dearest coz, I have only time to add Mrs. U.'s most affectionate remembrances, and to conclude myself, ever thine. WM. COWPER.

Mr. and Mrs. Rose come on the twenty-second, and Johnny with them ; the former to stay ten days. It is strange that any body should suspect Mrs. Smith of having been assisted by me. None writes more rapidly or more correctly—twenty pages in a morning, which I have often read and heard read at night, and found not a word to alter. This moment comes a very kind letter from Joseph. Sephus tells me I may expect to see very soon the strongest assurances from the people of property, of every description, to support the King and present constitution. In this I do most sincerely rejoice as you will. He wishes to know my political opinions, and he shall most truly.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Weston, Dec. 3, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—No obstacle occurs at present on our part, and none will, I hope, occur hereafter, to

your giving us the pleasure of yours and Mrs. Rose's company at the time you mention. Mrs. Unwin rather improves in her health notwithstanding the gloom of this most gloomy of all winters, and my spirits have lately been somewhat mended; some additional amendment they will derive, I doubt not, from your presence, and in the mean time the expectation of you shall serve us both as a preparatory cordial. The Larding-pins you remember, save and except which we have only one charge to trouble you with—two half-pints of Indian Soy if you can conveniently bring them.

The propitious time for proceeding with Milton is not yet come, and I have several other things to do which are equally at a stay. All hindrances beside out of the question, my eyes alone would have been an insurmountable one, which have been almost constantly in a state of inflammation ever since my return to Weston. I now know how to pity authors who write for bread, and are consequently obliged to despise those impediments and disabilities to which I allow myself to yield.

Mr. Hill, I understand, is no longer a neighbour of yours, but has migrated to Savile Row; he tells me too that he has relinquished his seat in the office, which he found no longer tenable under the treatment he has received from certain judges whom he does not name. You perhaps can tell me the particulars, and will gratify my curiosity by doing so when we meet.

The Courtenays have been absent three weeks on a visit to Ld. Petre in Norfolk, and are expected here on Thursday. William Throck—n is at the Hall, having retired hither, as I understand, for the

cure of a violent cold attended with an alarming cough. I have not yet seen, but am just going to call on him.

Adieu.—with our united complimts. to Mrs. Rose and Mrs. Farr, I remain, my dear friend, most truly yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

4th Dec. 1792.

DEAR SIR,—In your last experience, extraordinary as it was, I found nothing presumptuous. God is free to manifest Himself, both in manner and measure as He pleases; and to you He is pleased to manifest Himself uncommonly in both. It would be better with poor me, if, being the subject of so many of your manifestations (for which I desire to be thankful both to God and you), I were made in some small degree at least a partaker of the comfort of them. But except that my nights are less molested than they used to be, I perceive at present no alteration at all for the better. My days are, many of them, stormy in the extreme, and the best of them are darkly clouded with melancholy.

Still I am waiting for freedom of mind and spirit, as well as for leisure and opportunity, to proceed with Milton. Yet the answers you have received to your prayers on that subject have been so explicit, that I know not how to desire you to make it a matter of prayer again. It is certain, nevertheless, that without some great change both in my mind and outward circumstances, I shall never be able to perform that work, or never be able to perform it well. My eyes too for a long time have

been inflamed to a degree that would alone disable me for such a labour. God knows how much I feel myself in want of animal spirits, courage, hope, and all mental requisites,—to a wonderful degree, considering the prayers that have been made, and the answers that have been obtained about it.

You ought not to suffer anxiety on temporal accounts to rob you of your peace, as I suspect it has done lately. He that gives you so plentifully the bread of life, will He not give you the bread that perishes? Doubtless he will. Fear not.

Adieu. Mrs. U. is tolerably well, and sends her kind remembrances.—I am, yours sincerely,

W. COWPER.¹

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY²

7 Dec. 1792.

Lady Hesketh is in Bath, in good health I believe, and I am sure in good spirits. Warm as ever on the side of monarchy and ministry, and hating the French most perfectly, but droll and humorous in her manner of expressing that hatred to a degree that forces me, even me, to laugh heartily.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Saturday, Dec. 8, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I awoke this morning with these words relating to my work loudly and distinctly spoken:—

¹ '1792, Dec. 4.—I recd. a letter from the Esq. again desiring to be prayed for respecting Milton.'—Teedon's Diary.

² A portion of the letter relates to the portrait of Hayley expected by Cowper.

‘Apply assistance in my case, indigent and necessitous.’

And about three mornings since with these :—

‘It will not be by common and ordinary means.’

It seems better therefore that I should wait till it shall please God to set my wheels in motion, than make another beginning only to be obliterated like the two former.

I have also heard these words on the same subject :—

‘Meantime raise an expectation and desire of it among the people.’

My experiences this week have been for the most part dreadful in the extreme, and to such a degree in one instance, that poor Mrs. Unwin has been almost as much in an agony as myself. Yet some little abatements have been intermingled; but very slight—so slight as almost to leave me hopeless as they found me. I cannot indeed be properly said to possess any hope at all; for if I seem for a short season to have one, it is always in the enemy’s power with one puff to blow it all away, and he never fails to do it.

I write in great haste, and have not time to add more, except that I am, sincerely yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

Dec. 9, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—The opinion I bolted in my last, and in which I foresaw how much we should differ, is no new one with me, nor a symptom of any extraordinary dejection. I have entertained it these twenty years, and doubt not that it will

accompany me to my last moments ; my reasons for it are chiefly such as I collect from my own experience, and being such, are incomunicable to others, at least in the full force of them. I must be contented therefore to be singular. I could argue much in favour of it also from another passage or two of Scripture than that to which I alluded, but it is not worth while. Could I convince all the world of the truth of it, no good would ensue to any body, and in the meantime I know not that it is at all prejudicial to myself. If I perish, and I have long expected that finally I shall, it is no matter whether by a great enemy or a small one, whether gorged by a serpent of Africa thirty feet long, or by the bite of a viper.

Neither need you be uneasy on the subject of Milton. I shall not find that labour too heavy for me, if I have health and leisure. The season of the year is unfavourable to me respecting the former ; and Mrs. Unwin's present weakness allows me less of the latter than the occasion seems to call for. But the business is in no haste. The artists employed to furnish the embellishments are not likely to be very expeditious ; and a small portion only of the work will be wanted from me at once ; for the intention is to deal it out to the public piecemeal. I am therefore, under no great anxiety on that account. It is not, indeed, an employment, that I should have chosen for myself ; because poetry pleases and amuses me more, and would cost me less labour properly so called. All this I felt before I engaged with Johnson ; and did, in the first instance, actually decline the service : but he was urgent ; and, at last, I suffered myself to be persuaded.

The season of the year, as I have already said, is particularly adverse to me: yet not in itself, perhaps, more adverse than any other; but the approach of it always reminds me of the same season in the dreadful seventy-three, and in the more dreadful eighty-six. I cannot help terrifying myself with doleful misgivings and apprehensions; nor is the enemy negligent to seize all the advantage that the occasion gives him. Thus, hearing much from him, and having little or no sensible support from God, I suffer inexpressible things till January is over. And even then, whether increasing years have made me more liable to it, or despair, the longer it lasts, grows naturally darker, I find myself more inclined to melancholy than I was a few years since. God only knows where this will end; but where it is likely to end, unless He interpose powerfully in my favour, all may know.

My opportunity will not serve me to write more. Mrs. Unwin is as well at least as when we came out of Sussex. She sends her affectionate remembrances, and a turkey, of which she desires your acceptance. It goes by the coach, was killed on Thursday morning, and may therefore either be eaten immediately or kept three or four days if you choose it. Our united compliments attend Miss Catlett, and I remain, my dear friend, most sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Dec. 14, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—You have waited thus long for a note from me, only because I have nothing to communicate but my distress, which it seems more

charitable to keep to myself. At last, however, distressed as I still am, I write, lest I should cause you greater trouble by my silence. Yesterday, having had a quiet night, I was tolerably well in spirits; but, yesterday excepted, I have had a woful week, and am this day as dejected as ever. My nights are almost all haunted with notices of great affliction at hand,—of what kind I know not; but in degree such as I shall with extreme difficulty sustain, and hardly at last find deliverance. At four this morning, I started out of a dream, in which I seemed sitting before the fire, and very close to it, in great trouble; when suddenly stamping violently with my foot, and springing suddenly from my seat, I awoke, and heard these words,—‘*I hope the Lord will carry me through it.*’ This needs no interpretation. It is plainly a forewarning of woe to come; and though you may tell me I ought to take comfort from the hope expressed in the words, yet truly I cannot. I know too well what it is to be carried through affliction, as to be left to feel all its bitterness; and after the thousand experiences that I have had of that sort, tremble at the approach of a new one. Beside which, the notice being general, and no particular quarter signified, from which I may expect the cloud that threatens me, my imagination is left free to create an endless train of horrible phantoms, with which it terrifies itself; and which are, some of them, perhaps, more to be dreaded than the reality.

The promise, that in God we shall have peace, has certainly a comfortable aspect on the future; but He knows, that I never have at present a moment's peace in Him.

Mrs. Unwin is pretty well this morning, except that she shares with me in my alarms. She joins me in kind remembrances.—I remain, dear Sir,
Yours sincerely,

Wm. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL

Weston, Dec. 16, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,—We differ so little, that it is pity we should not agree. The possibility of restoring our diseased government is, I think, the only point on which we are not of one mind. If you are right, and it cannot be touched in the medical way, without danger of absolute ruin to the constitution, keep the doctors at a distance, say I—and let us live as long as we can. But perhaps physicians might be found of skill sufficient for the purpose, were they but as willing as able. Who are they? Not those honest blunderers the mob, but our governors themselves. As it is in the power of any individual to be honest if he will, any body of men are, as it seems to me, equally possessed of the same option. For I can never persuade myself to think the world so constituted by the Author of it, and human society, which is His ordinance, so shabby a business, that the buying and selling of votes and consciences should be essential to its existence. As to multiplied representation, I know not that I foresee any great advantage likely to arise from that. Provided there be but a reasonable number of reasonable heads laid together for the good of the nation, the end may as well be answered by five hundred, as it would be by a thousand and perhaps better. But then they should be honest as well as wise; and in

order that they may be so, they should put it out of their own power to be otherwise. This they might certainly do, if they would; and would they do it, I am not convinced that any great mischief would ensue. You say, ‘somebody must have influence,’ but I see no necessity for it. Let integrity of intention and a due share of ability be supposed, and the influence will be in the right place, it will all centre in the zeal and good of the nation. That will influence their debates and decisions, and nothing else ought to do it. You will say perhaps that, wise men and honest men as they are supposed, they are yet liable to be split into almost as many differences of opinion as there are individuals: but I rather think not. It is observed of Prince Eugene and the Duke of Marlborough, that each always approved and seconded the plans and views of the other; and the reason given for it is, that they were men of equal ability. The same cause that could make two unanimous, would make twenty so; and would at least secure a majority among as many hundreds. As to the reformation of the church, I want none, unless by a better position for the inferior clergy: and if that could be brought about by emaciating a little some of our too corpulent dignitaries, I should be well contented.

The dissenters, I think, catholics, and others, have all a right to the privileges of all other Englishmen, because to deprive them is persecution; and persecution on any account, but especially on a religious one, is an abomination. But after all, *valeat respublica*, I love my country, I love my king, and I wish peace and prosperity to Old England. Adieu!

W. C.

TO THOMAS PARK

Weston Underwood, Dec. 17, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,—You are very kind in thinking it worth while to inquire after so irregular a correspondent. When I had read your last, I persuaded myself that I had answered your obliging letter received while I was at Earham, and seemed clearly to remember it; but, upon better recollection, am inclined to think myself mistaken, and that I have many pardons to ask for neglecting to do it so long.

While I was at Mr. Hayley's I could hardly find opportunity to write to any body. He is an early riser and breakfasts early, and unless I could rise early enough myself to despatch a letter before breakfast, I had no leisure to do it at all. For immediately after breakfast we repaired to the library, where we studied in concert till noon; and the rest of my time was so occupied by necessary attention to my poor invalid, Mrs. Unwin, and by various other engagements that to write was impossible.

Since my return, I have been almost constantly afflicted with weak and inflamed eyes, and indeed have wanted spirits as well as leisure. If you can, therefore, you must pardon me; and you will do it perhaps the rather, when I assure you that not you alone, but every person and every thing that had demands upon me has been equally neglected. A strange weariness that has long had dominion over me has indisposed and indeed disqualified me for all employment; and my hindrances besides have been

such that I have been sadly in arrear in all quarters. A thousand times I have been sorry and ashamed that your MSS. are yet unrevised, and if you knew the compunction that it has cost me, you would pity me: for I feel as if I were guilty in that particular, though my conscience tells me that it could not be otherwise.

Before I received your letter written from Margate, I had formed a resolution never to be engraven, and was confirmed in it by my friend Hayley's example. But, learning since, though I have not learned it from himself, that my bookseller has an intention to prefix a copy of Abbot's picture of me to the next edition of my poems, at his own expense, if I can be prevailed upon to consent to it; in consideration of the liberality of his behaviour, I have felt my determination shaken. This intelligence, however, comes to me from a third person, and till it reaches me in a direct line from Johnson, I can say nothing to *him* about it. When he shall open to me his intentions himself, I will not be backward to mention to him your obliging offer, and shall be particularly gratified, if I must be engraved at last, to have that service performed for me by a friend.

I thank you for the anecdote, which could not fail to be very pleasant, and remain, my dear Sir, with gratitude and affection, yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

21st Dec. 1792.

DEAR SIR,—The day has not risen upon me since I wrote last, when I could have addressed you in

any other language than that of the deepest melancholy ; nor do I write now, because I have anything more acceptable to say, but merely that you may know I am not unmindful of you. My views of the future are still as disheartening as ever. God is as far from me, and consequently all spiritual relief, as ever. My distress before I rise in the morning, is hardly supportable ; and such as it is when I rise, it often continues through the day, though sometimes the incidents of it call my attention from myself a little, and a slight abatement is the consequence. But comforts of this kind afford me none on reflection ; because the remedy is not that of the good Physician, but such as the world furnishes to its own. Milton is still a mountain on my shoulders ; and it seems to me, that if the new year brings with it no favourable change for me, either in outward circumstances or mental qualifications, I must at least relinquish him. But we expect Mr. and Mrs. Rose from London to-morrow. They will be here by dinner-time, and purpose to stay about ten days. With him I mean to converse on this subject ; for there is no man better qualified, in respect of acquaintance with the literary world, to give me counsel.

With Mrs. U.'s kind remembrances, I remain,
dr. Sir, yrs. sincerely,

Wm. COWPER.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, Dec. 26, 1792.

THAT I may not be silent till my silence alarms you, I snatch a moment to tell you that although *toujours triste* I am not worse than usual, but my

opportunities of writing are *paucified*, as perhaps Dr. Johnson would have dared to say, and the few that I have are shortened by company, Mr. Rose and his wife, who came hither a few days since. I trembled at their arrival, conscious of the necessity of remaining cheerful, though with a heavy heart, and having no better means at my command, have endeavoured to qualify myself to entertain them by laudanum. I take a few drops every night, which have so far effected what I wished as to have levelled my troubles a little and afforded my spirits an opportunity to rise, though not to a lofty pitch yet to a pitch sufficient for the purpose. But one evil consequence ensues ; they occasion my lying longer in bed, and except I can find it before breakfast, not a moment offers in the whole day that can possibly be given to writing.

Give my love to dear Tom, and thank him for his very apposite extract, which I should be happy indeed to turn to any account. How often do I wish, in the course of every day, that I could be employed once more in poetry, and how often of course that this Miltonic trap had never caught me ! The year ninety-two shall stand chronicled in my remembrance as the most melancholy that I have ever known, except the few weeks that I spent at Earham ; and such it has been principally, because being engaged to Milton, I felt myself no longer free for any other engagement. That ill-fated work, impracticable in itself, has made every thing else impracticable.

Pitt, I fear, will hardly be able to entitle himself to the honour you say you shall yield him if he extricates us from the danger of a war. Yet if he is

wise he will do it almost at any rate, for the discontents which have lately made Government tremble, will infallibly be doubled by such an enormous increase of taxation as a war must necessarily occasion.

I am very Pindaric, and obliged to be so by the hurry of the hour. My friends are come down to breakfast. Hurdis is more unhappy than ever. Another of his sisters is dangerously ill, and he complains bitterly of this new affliction, which he says is more than either his purse or his patience is able to bear.

One of my old friends,¹ I believe, has quarrelled with me for my visit to you. He says I ought never to have connected myself with the author of the *Essay on Old Maids*.² Wicked rogue! what have you said in that wicked book? It is something in your favour, however, that he has five old maiden sisters. But I am afraid you have been very naughty. Adieu! with dear Mary's love, I remain ever and most truly yours,

Wm. COWPER.

Mr. Rose presents his compliments and hopes that your next trip to London will be more propitious to his hopes of knowing you.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Thursday, 27 Dec. 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I have just time to tell you that since I wrote last my experiences have been somewhat less painful than usual. Feeling the impossibility of entertaining my friends unless I could procure some little relief to my spirits, I had recourse to a few drops of laudanum taken nightly. They have

¹ Bagot.

² 3 vols., 1785.

suspended the fever, and I am, of course, less dejected.

I dreamed that I said—‘Why tarry his chariot wheels. Oh, why tarry the wheels of his chariot !’

And waking out of this dream I heard these words:—

‘Make sure. Faith and Hope will soon be given you.’

Another time I heard these:—

‘I read Milton now with other eyes than I ever did before.’

God grant me what He promises, and enable me to fulfil my engagement ! Amen.—Yours sincerely,

W.M. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

1 Jan. 1793.

DEAR SIR,—My time since I wrote last has passed quietly, except the night before last and yesterday. That night was a night of distressing experiences, and the day was consequently a melancholy one. This morning I rose in rather a more cheerful frame of mind than usual, having had two notices of a more comfortable cast than the generality of mine. I waked saying,

I shall perish.

which was immediately answered by a vision of a wineglass, and these words,—

A whole glass.

In allusion, no doubt, to the famous story of Mrs. Honeywood.¹ Soon after, I heard these,—

‘I see in *this* case just occasion of Pity.’

¹ The story of Mrs. Honeywood, wife of Robert Honeywood of Charing in Kent, is related by Fuller. Being afflicted in mind she sent for a

I am sorry that Mr. Killingworth is so painfully indisposed,¹ for I know that an interruption of his industry can be ill afforded. But your comfort may be, that the Lord knows it too. Mr. Courtenay spoke to me the other day about his Binding, and was perfectly satisfied with it, but he thought him long in finishing.

Our friends leave us on Friday. May the new year be a more propitious year to us all than its predecessor. God grant it! Amen.

Mrs. Unwin is much as usual, and joins me in kind remembrance. We have received our annual remittance from the secret benefactor to the indigent.
—I am yours sincerely,

W.M. COWPER.

TO THOMAS PARK

Weston Underwood, Jan. 5, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,—A few lines must serve to introduce to you my much-valued friend Mr. Rose, and to thank you for your very obliging attention in sending me so approved a remedy for my disorder. It is no fault of yours, but it will be a disappointment to you to know, that I have long been in possession of that remedy, and have tried it without effect, or, to speak more truly, with an unfavourable one. Judging by the pain it causes, I conclude that it is of the caustic kind, and may therefore be sovereign in cases where the eyelids are ulcerated;

clergyman, who, however, failed to comfort her. Having a Venice glass in her hand, she burst forth with: ‘I am as surely damned, as this glass is broken!’ and flung the glass to the ground. Strange to say, the glass did not break. Fuller received the story from Dr. Morton, Bishop of Durham, who died at Easton Maudit near Olney.

¹ ‘1792, December 28.—Worthy very ill.’—*Teedon’s Diary.*

but mine is a dry inflammation, which it has always increased as often as I have used it. I used it again, after having long since resolved to use it no more, that I might not seem, even to myself, to slight your kindness, but with no better effect than in every former instance.

You are very candid in crediting so readily the excuse I make for not having yet revised your MSS. and as kind in allowing me still longer time. I refer you for a more particular account of the circumstances that make all literary pursuits at present impracticable to me, to the young gentleman who delivers this into your hands. He is perfectly master of the subject, having just left me after having spent a fortnight with us.

You asked me a long time since a question concerning the Olney Hymns, which I do not remember that I have ever answered. Those marked C are mine, one excepted, which, though it bears that mark, was written by Mr. Newton. I have not the collection at present, and therefore cannot tell you which it is.

You must extend your charity still a little farther, and excuse a short answer to your two obliging letters. I do every thing with my pen in a hurry, but will not conclude without entreating you to make my thanks and best compliments to the lady who was so good as to trouble herself for my sake to write a character of the medicine.—I remain, my dear Sir, sincerely yours,

W.M. COWPER.

Your request does me honour. Johnson will have orders in a few days to send you a copy of the edition just published.

TO THE REV. JAMES HURDIS

Weston, Jan. 6, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,—I seize a passing moment merely to say that I feel for your distresses, and sincerely pity you; and I shall be happy to learn from your next, that your sister's amendment has superseded the necessity you feared of a journey to London. Your candid account of the effect that your afflictions have both on your spirits and temper I can perfectly understand, having laboured much in that fire myself, and perhaps more than any man. It is in such a school, however, that we must learn, if we ever truly learn it, the natural depravity of the human heart, and of our own in particular, together with the consequence that necessarily follows such wretched premises; our indispensable need of the atonement, and our inexpressible obligations to Him who made it. This reflection cannot escape a thinking mind, looking back on these ebullitions of fretfulness and impatience, to which it has yielded in a season of great affliction.

Having lately had company who left us only on the fourth, I have done nothing indeed, since my return from Sussex, except a trifle or two, which it was incumbent upon me to write. Milton hangs in doubt; neither spirits nor opportunity suffice me for that labour. I regret continually that I ever suffered myself to be persuaded to undertake it. The most that I hope to effect is a complete revisal of my own Homer. Johnson told my friend, who has just left me, that it would begin to be reviewed in the next *Analytical*, and that he hoped the review of it would

not offend me. By this I understand that if I am not offended, it will be owing more to my own equanimity, than to the mildness of the critic. So be it! He will put an opportunity of victory over myself into my hands, and I will endeavour not to lose it!—Adieu!

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Jan. 9, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—If you regretted your departure from Weston you left those behind you who regretted it as much; but as for me, I was fast asleep at that moment and knew it not. I have begun to follow your advice, and have already revised and made some alterations in the twenty-third book of the *Iliad*; some of them sin against my own judgment, but one must consent in a degree to be led by those who lead the Public. When you came I began to take laudanum, perfectly sure that I should perform the part of host but ill without it, having no spirits nor any other means of getting any. I still continue the practice, and to that practice it is owing that I can endure even to look at Homer. To be disgusted with what I have written is no uncommon thing with me, and when my melancholy is very predominant, I cannot bear a line of it.

Thank Mrs. Rose on our part for her kind valediction which I found as soon as I entered the study. It spoke the genuine language of affection, and consequently proved a cordial to us both. That very morning Elizabeth Smith's mother came hither to give her daughter's answer, which was that she was a sad one to wake in the night, and therefore

not fit to have the care of an infant; but the true reason, I presume, is that she and her mother could not part. Since her refusal Mrs. Unwin has made the offer to another who says that she wishes for a service of that kind, and should have been very happy in yours, but can by no means live in London. Girls fit to be nurses, and worthy to be trusted with little William,¹ are scarce, and especially scarce in this country, where the lace pillow is the only thing they dandle. I am afraid therefore we must come to this unpleasant conclusion, that we have now done our best, and must content ourselves with wishing you better success elsewhere.

I shall be glad when the bargain for the copyright of Homer can be struck with Johnson, since I foresee an occasion to draw on him approaching, and would not willingly do it till that negotiation is settled. Forget not to impress him with a due sense of the difficulties I find to proceed with Milton, in order that if after all I should find that business impracticable, he may be the better prepared for a disappointment.

I have no news yet from Hayley. Perhaps I have hurt him by insinuating a charge of indecency or something worse against his *Essay on Old Maids*. If so, I shall be very sorry, but there was no avoiding it. Adieu. I must now to breakfast. Mrs. Unwin unites with me in affectionate remembrances to yourself and Mrs. Rose, in which Mrs. Farr has also her due share.

Mr. Newton's Preface I have seen, but entirely forgotten it was designed for the first edition of the first volume; but Johnson then objected to it. The

¹ See Letter of 2nd June 1792.

author of it, however, could not so be satisfied. We are glad the bacon came safe.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

11 Jan. 1793.

DEAR SIR,—If you are called to carry my troubles it is no wonder that you feel yourself sometimes immersed in sorrow and despondency. As for me, I find no sensible relief at all, except what I must attribute to the effect of an opiate, in which I mean to indulge myself till this month be over.

I have had a small matter to do for Johnson in the literary way this half-year, and through mere incapacity and lowness of spirits, have been obliged to neglect it. In other days it would have cost me but a single morning. Last night I received a letter from him requiring it speedily; and this morning I awoke out of a dream that has disabled me more than ever. I would relate it, but have not time: its tendency, however, was to inculcate the doctrine of difficulties to be surmounted by unassisted men, and therefore insurmountable.

These experiences kill all the little comfort which the present moment, though bad, yet not so bad as I am made to expect, might otherwise yield me. Time passes; I have many things to do, one of them arduous indeed; I mean Milton. God is silent; prayer obtains no answer;¹ one discouragement treads on the heels of another, and the consequence is that I do nothing but prognosticate my own destruction.

¹ 'Jan. 17.—I sent my dream of the eggs and serpent to the Esqr.'—*Teedon's Diary.*

Mrs. Unwin has had a good night, and continues much the same. Adieu.—Sincerely yours,
Wm. COWPER.

Molly Andrews has quarrelled with us, and says we may do our errands ourselves, which is the reason that opportunities to send have been so scarce.

TO LADY HESKETH

The Lodge, Jan. 19, 1793.

SUFFICIENTLY apprised beforehand that my letter would not be worth more, I have waited till you might have it for a groat; arriving on Monday, I conclude that it will find you in New Norfolk Street, and will find you, I hope, much improved in your health by the trip that you have made to Bath. On no other terms shall I fail to hate the place that has deprived us of your company. You know not what you lose by being absent from Weston at this moment. We have just received from Johnny a cask of the best Holland gin, and in a few days I shall receive from Charlotte Smith a present of her novel, not yet published, entitled the *Old Manor House*, in three volumes. How happy wouldest thou find thyself in the enjoyment of both these articles at once!

If thou wilt not allow that a season of alarm is the season above all others, when petitioners for reasonable grants should be most importunate with government, thou wilt at least allow that it is the fittest time imaginable for government to give them satisfaction, because it is especially the season

when its own interest may be best promoted and secured by doing it. It is always desirable to make friends of enemies, but never so desirable as when those possible friends continuing actual enemies have an opportunity to put their enmity in force with most advantage. This seems reasonable, and I hear accordingly that our governors have in reality a design to accede to all that the dissenters have already required, without waiting till they shall apply again. It will be wisely done. But I stand in doubt of the authenticity of my intelligence, merely because a government measure so wise and so just has been a great rarity at all times.

Mrs. Wrighte¹ lately paid a morning visit at the Hall, and the Miss Knapps² were with her. In their return they very kindly stopped at our door, to inquire after the health of me and Mrs. Unwin. I behaved, as usual, very ill on the occasion, and did not go out to speak to them; the reason, however, was that just being returned from my walk, and in my slippers, and the day being extremely raw and damp, and having, besides, an inflammation in my eyes, I was fearful of taking cold; and shouldst thou see any of the ladies in question, as I suppose thou wilt ere long, thou canst not do better than plead my excuse by telling them so. If I do a rude thing I have at least the virtue to be ashamed of it; which is some apology, and more than every clown can say.

Thou canst not do better than send me the draft immediately, for at this season of the year the money-birds are full fledged, and fly at an immoderate rate; whole flocks of them disappear in a

¹ Of Gayhurst.

² Of Little Linford Hall.

moment.¹ Unless thou tell me who they are that eat me up alive, I can say nothing about it. In fact, I am eaten up by nothing but an enormous taxation, which has doubled the price of everything within my memory ; which makes it impossible for a man of small means like me, to live at all like a gentleman upon his income. Adieu, Mrs. U. sends her sincere love to you ; she is as well as at any time since her last attack, and that is not much to boast of. When you went you took with you the key of the caddy. Bring it soon. I have a letter from Dublin about my Homer, which would do thy heart good. Adieu.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, Jan. 20, 1793.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—Now I know that you are safe, I treat you, as you see, with a philosophical indifference, not acknowledging your kind and immediate answer to anxious inquiries, till it suits my own convenience. I have learned, however, from my late solicitude, that not only you, but yours, interest me to a degree that, should anything happen to either of you, would be very inconsistent with my peace. Sometimes I thought that you were extremely ill, and once or twice, that you were dead. As often some tragedy reached my ear concerning little Tom. ‘*O, vanæ mentes hominum!*’ How liable are we to a thousand impositions, and how

¹ For example, Cowper and Mrs. Unwin had this day, most unwisely, sent Hannah Willson to a boarding-school at Bedford. See vol. i. p. 332; vol. ii. p. 288. Late in the year Lady Hesketh gave Cowper ‘hints of the many *idle people* his unbounded liberality helped to make such, and of ye *swarms* who lived in his kitchen, but he took no notice of this.’ Lady Hesketh to John Johnson, 27th September 1793.

indebted to honest old Time, who never fails to undeceive us ! Whatever you had in prospect you acted kindly by me not to make me partaker of your expectations, for I have a spirit if not so sanguine as yours, yet that would have waited for your coming with anxious impatience, and have been dismally mortified by the disappointment. Had you come, and come without notice too, you would not have surprised us more, than (as the matter was managed) we were surprised at the arrival of your picture. It reached us in the evening, after the shutters were closed, at a time when a chaise might actually have brought you without giving us the least previous intimation. Then it was, that Samuel,¹ with his cheerful countenance, appeared at the study door, and with a voice as cheerful as his looks, exclaimed, ‘ Mr. Hayley is come, Madam ! ’ We both started, and in the same moment cried, ‘ Mr. Hayley come ! and where is he ? ’ The next moment corrected our mistake, and finding Mary’s voice grow suddenly tremulous, I turned and saw her weeping.

I do nothing, notwithstanding all your exhortations : my idleness is a proof against them all, or, to speak more truly, my difficulties are so. Something indeed I do. I play at pushpin with Homer every morning before breakfast, fingering and polishing, as Paris did his armour. I have lately had a letter from Dublin on that subject, which has pleased me.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

25th Jan. 1793.

DEAR SIR,—Nothing new has occurred in my experience since we saw you, one circumstance

¹ Roberts.

excepted of the distressing kind. I have often told you that the notices given to you come to me unattended by any sensible effect; yet believing that they are from God, and gracious answers to your prayers, I have been accustomed to lean a little upon them, and have been the better enabled to sustain the constant pressure of my burthens. But of late I have been totally deprived even of that support, having been assured that though they are indeed from God, so far from being designed as comforts to me, to me they are reproaches, biting sarcasms, sharp strokes of irony,—in short, the deadliest arrows to be found of the quiver of the Almighty. To you indeed they are manna, and to Mrs. Unwin, because you are both at peace with God; but to me, who have unpardonably offended Him, they are a cup of deadly wine, against which there is no antidote. So the cloudy pillar was light to Israel, but darkness and horror to Egypt.

I have nothing in the shape of an answer to this suggestion. My experience, the desertion that I endure, my frequent agonies of despair, all tend to give it credit and confirmation.—Why have they never given me in any single instance the least sensible comfort? Do they not profess to have me for their object? And yet I alone receive no benefit from them.

This has much the appearance under which I have been taught to view them; and those in particular which seemed to encourage me in my work, and to promise me success if I attempted it, have been twice demonstrated to have no such meaning, or not to have meant it seriously, by the complete failure of my endeavours.

In other respects I am much as usual, and so is Mrs. Unwin, except that this sad and dreary season is hurtful to us both by confining us.—I remain, dr. Sir, sincerely yours,

Wm. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, Jan. 29, 1793.

MY DEAREST HAYLEY,—I truly sympathise with you under your weight of sorrow for the loss of our good Samaritan.¹ But be not brokenhearted, my friend! Remember, the loss of those we love is the condition on which we live ourselves; and that he who chooses his friends wisely from among the excellent of the earth, has a sure ground to hope concerning them when they die, that a merciful God has made them far happier than they could be here, and that we shall join them soon again. This is solid comfort, could we but avail ourselves of it; but I confess the difficulty of doing so. Sorrow is like the deaf adder, ‘that hears not the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely’; and I feel so much myself for the death of Austin, that my own chief consolation is, that I had never seen him. Live yourself, I beseech you, for I have seen so much of you that I can by no means spare you, and I will live as long as it shall please God to permit. I know you set some value on me, therefore let that promise comfort you, and give us not reason to say, like David’s servant, ‘We know that it would have pleased thee more if all we had died, than this one, for whom thou art inconsolable.’ You have still Romney, and Carwardine, and Guy, and me,

¹ Dr. Austin.

my poor Mary, and I know not how many beside; as many, I suppose, as ever had an opportunity of spending a day with you. He who has the most friends must necessarily lose the most, and he whose friends are numerous as yours may the better spare a part of them. It is a changing transient scene: yet a little while, and this poor dream of life will be over with all of us.—The living, and they who live unhappy, they are indeed subjects of sorrow.

And on this account poor Mrs. Smith¹ has engrossed much of my thoughts and my compassion. I know not a more pitiable case. Chained to her desk like a slave to his oar, with no other means of subsistence for herself and her numerous children, with a broken constitution, unequal to the severe labour enjoined by her necessity, she is indeed to be pitied. It is easy to foresee that notwithstanding all your active benevolence, she will and must ere long die a martyr to her exigencies. I never want riches except when I hear of such distress.

This has been a time in which I have heard no news but of the shocking kind, and the public news is as shocking as any. War I perceive—war in procinct²—and I cannot but consider it as a prelude to war at home. The national burthen is already nearly intolerable, and the expenses of a war will make it quite so. We have many spirits in the country eager to revolt, and to act a French tragedy on the stage of England. Alas! poor Louis!³ I will tell you what the French have done. They have made me weep for a king of France, which I

¹ Charlotte Smith, the novelist.

² ‘War in procinct’ is a quotation from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, vi. 19.

³ Louis XVI. of France, executed 21 Jan. 1793.

never thought to do, and they have made me sick of the very name of liberty, which I never thought to be. Oh, how I detest them! Coxcombs, as they are, on this occasion as they ever are on all. Apes of the Spartan and the Roman character, with neither the virtue nor the good sense that belonged to it. Is this treason at Earham? I hope not. If it is, I must be a traitor.

Adieu, my beloved friend. Mary drinks tar-water, and is the better for it, though she has lately begun. I write in the greatest haste, and remain ever yours,

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON

Jan. 31, 1793.

To Pæan!

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,—Even as you foretold, so it came to pass. On Tuesday I received your letter, and on Tuesday came the pheasants; for which I am indebted in many thanks, as well as Mrs. Unwin, both to your kindness and to your kind friend Mr. Copeman.

In Copeman's ear this truth let Echo tell,—
‘Immortal bards like mortal pheasants well:
And when his clerkship's out, I wish him herds
Of golden clients for his golden birds.

Our friends the Courtenays have never dined with us since their marriage, *because* we have never asked them; and we have never asked them, *because* poor Mrs. Unwin is not so equal to the task of providing for and entertaining company as before this last illness. But this is no objection to the arrival here of a bustard; rather it is a cause for which we shall be particularly glad to see the monster. It will be

a handsome present to *them*. So let the bustard come, as the Lord Mayor of London said to the hare, when he was hunting,—let her come, a' God's name: I am not afraid of her.

Adieu, my dear cousin and caterer. My eyes terribly bad; else I had much more to say to you.—
Ever affectionately yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Feb. 2, 1793.

DEAR SIR,—It is with great unwillingness that I write, knowing that I *can* say nothing but what will distress you. I despair of every thing, and my despair is perfect, because it is founded on a persuasion, that there is no effectual help for me, even in God.

From four this morning till after seven I lay meditating terrors, such terrors as no language can express, and as no heart I am sure but mine ever knew. My very finger-ends tingled with it, as indeed they often do. I then slept and dreamed a long dream, in which I told Mrs. U. with many tears that my salvation is impossible, for the reason given above. I recapitulated, in the most impassioned accent and manner, the unexampled severity of God's dealings with me in the course of the last twenty years, especially in the year 73, and again in 86, and concluded all with observing that I *must* infallibly perish, and that the Scriptures which speak of the insufficiency of man to save himself can never be understood *unless* I perish.

I then made a sudden transition in my dream to one of the public streets in London, where I was met by a dray; the forehorse of the team came full

against me, and in violent anger I damn'd the drayman for it.

Such are my nocturnal experiences, and my daily ones are little better.—I know that I have much fever, but it is a fever for which there is no cure, and is as much the afflictive hand of God upon me, as any other circumstance of my distress.

I thank you for your two last. Delay is no denial indeed; but in extremities such as mine, it is very severe and hard to bear.—I am, dear Sir, yours sincerely,

Wm. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Weston, 5 Feb. 1793.

THE allowance of £200 clear must be a very honest allowance on so small an edition, in respect, I mean, of the number, and the copyright still remaining in me will, I trust, be a good nest-egg in future. . . . I am pleased, too, that Johnson, instead of pressing upon me his first purpose to publish a bedizened edition of my poems, adopts mine, and will content himself with giving me the profits of a plain one.

In this last revisal of my work (the Homer) I have made a number of small improvements, and am now more convinced than ever, having exercised a cooler judgment upon it than before I could, that the translation will make its way. There must be time for the conquest of vehement and long-rooted prejudice; but without much self-partiality, I believe that the conquest will be made; and am certain that I should be of the same opinion, were the work another man's. I shall soon have finished the *Odyssey*, and when I have, will send the corrected copy of both to Johnson. Adieu!

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

8 Feb. 1793.

DEAR SIR,—I feel myself much your debtor, on account of your earnest solicitudes for me and my better health of spirit, and sometimes am not a little concerned lest your own bodily health at least should suffer by the frequent mortifications and disappointments which you receive from me. But if God indeed employ you, and if He Himself interest you in my cause, as I trust He does—then all fear is groundless.

Since I wrote last, finding my nights intolerable, I have again had recourse to the use of a few drops of laudanum, and have been somewhat relieved. But spiritual relief seems as distant as ever. While I can amuse myself with a pen or a book I am easy; but the moment I lay them down I begin instantly to ruminate on the various experiences of the last twenty years, and among them find a multitude that seem absolutely and for ever to forbid all hope of mercy. Some of these are indeed so emphatically forbidding, that unless it shall please God Himself to explain them to a different sense, and to a sense of which they do not appear to be susceptible, I know not how it is possible that I should ever hope again; at least with steadfastness. While they are out of my mind, I may perhaps have something like a hope; but in the instant of recollection, even the strongest confidence must yield. For though all things are possible to God, it is not possible that He should save whom He has declared He will destroy.—I am, dear Sir, yours sincerely,

Wm. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH

Feb. 10, 1793.

My pens are all split and my ink-glass is dry ;
Neither wit, common sense, nor ideas have I.

In vain has it been that I have made several attempts to write, since I came from Sussex ; unless more comfortable days arrive than I have the confidence to look for, there is an end of all writing with me. I have no spirits :—when the Rose came, I was obliged to prepare for his coming by a nightly dose of laudanum—twelve drops suffice ; but without them, I am devoured by melancholy.

A-propos of the Rose ! His wife in her political notions is the exact counterpart of yourself—loyal in the extreme. Therefore, if you find her thus inclined, when you become acquainted with her, you must not place her resemblance of yourself to the account of her admiration of you, for she is your likeness ready made. In fact, we are all of one mind, about government matters, and notwithstanding your opinion, the Rose is himself a Whig, and I am a Whig, and you, my dear, are a Tory, and all the Tories now-a-days call all the Whigs Republicans. How the deuce you came to be a Tory is best known to yourself ; you have to answer for this novelty to the shades of your ancestors, who were always Whigs ever since we had any. Adieu !

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Feb. 17, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have read the critique of my work in the *Analytical Review*, and am happy

to have fallen into the hands of a critic, rigorous enough indeed, but a scholar, and a man of sense, and who does not deliberately intend me mischief. I am better pleased indeed that he censures some things, than I should have been with unmixed commendation, for his censure will (to use the new diplomatic term) accredit his praises. In his particular remarks he is for the most part right, and I shall be the better for them ; but in his general ones I think he asserts too largely, and more than he could prove. With respect to inversions in particular, I know that they do not abound. Once they did, and I had Milton's example for it, not disapproved by Addison. But on Fuseli's remonstrance against them, I expunged the most, and in my new edition have fewer still. I know that they give dignity, and am sorry to part with them ; but, to parody an old proverb, he who lives in the year ninety-three, must do as in the year ninety-three is done by others. The same remark I have to make on his censure of inharmonious lines. I know them to be much fewer than he asserts, and not more in number than I accounted indispensably necessary to a due variation of cadence, I have, however, now in conformity with modern taste (overmuch delicate in my mind) given to a far greater number of them a flow as smooth as oil. A few I retain, and will, in compliment to my own judgment. He thinks me too faithful to compound epithets in the introductory lines, and I know his reason. He fears lest the English reader should blame Homer, whom he idolises, though hardly more than I, for such constant repetition. But there, I shall not alter. They are necessary to a just

representation of the original. In the affair of Outis, I shall throw him flat on his back by an unanswerable argument, which I shall give in a note, and with which I am furnished by Mrs. Unwin. So much for hypercriticism, which has run away with all my paper. This critic, by the way, is —; I know him by infallible indications.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

22 Feb. 1793.

DEAR SIR,—My experience since I saw you affords, on recollection, nothing worthy to be sent to Olney, except the following notice, which I commit to writing and communicate as a kind of curiosity rather than for any other reason; though Milton, who is at present an interesting character to us both, is undoubtedly the subject of it.

I waked the other morning with these words distinctly spoken to me:—

'Charles the Second, though he was or wished to be accounted a man of fine taste and an admirer of the Arts, never saw or expressed a wish to see the man whom he would have found alone superior to all the race of man.'

But in such a notice as this I find nothing to comfort, nothing spiritual. A thousand such would do me no real service. A single word of Christ is worth all that can be said either by men or angels concerning all the men of genius that ever lived; but such word I seldom hear.

I suffer much by continual inflammation in my eyes; in other respects I am much as usual, as Mrs. Unwin is likewise, and remain with her kind remembrances, sincerely yrs.,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JAMES HURDIS

Weston, Feb. 23, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,—My eyes, which have long been inflamed, will hardly serve me for Homer, and oblige me to make all my letters short. You have obliged me much by sending me so speedily the remainder of your notes. I have begun with them again, and find them, as before, very much to the purpose. More to the purpose they could not have been, had you been Poetry Professor already.¹ I rejoice sincerely in the prospect you have of that office, which, whatever may be your own thoughts of the matter, I am sure you will fill with great sufficiency. Would that my interest and power to serve you were greater! One string to my bow I have, and one only, which shall not be idle for want of my exertions. I thank you likewise for your very entertaining notices and remarks in the natural way. The hurry in which I write would not suffer me to send you many in return, had I many to send, but only two or three present themselves.

Frogs will feed on worms. I saw a frog gathering into his gullet an earth-worm as long as himself; it cost him time and labour, but at last he succeeded.

Mrs. Unwin and I, crossing a brook, saw from the footbridge somewhat at the bottom of the water which had the appearance of a flower. Observing it attentively, we found that it consisted of a circular assemblage of minnows; their heads all met in a centre; and their tails diverging at equal dis-

¹ At Oxford. He was appointed late in the year. See Letter of 24th November 1793.

tances, and being elevated above their heads, gave them the appearance of a flower half blown. One was longer than the rest; and as often as a straggler came in sight, he quitted his place to pursue him, and having driven him away, he returned to it again, no other minnow offering to take it in his absence. This we saw him do several times. The object that had attached them all was a dead minnow, which they seemed to be devouring.

After a very rainy day, I saw on one of the flower borders what seemed a long hair, but it had a waving twining motion. Considering more nearly, I found it alive, and endued with spontaneity, but could not discover at the ends of it either head or tail, or any distinction of parts. I carried it into the house, when the air of a warm room dried and killed it presently.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, Feb. 24, 1793.

YOUR letter (so full of kindness, and so exactly in unison with my own feelings for you) should have had, as it deserved to have, an earlier answer, had I not been perpetually tormented with inflamed eyes, which are a sad hindrance to me in every thing. But to make amends, if I do not send you an early answer, I send you at least a speedy one, being obliged to write as fast as my pen can trot, that I may shorten the time of poring upon paper as much as possible. Homer too has been another hindrance, for always when I can see, which is only about two hours every morning, and not at all by candle-light, I devote myself to him, being in haste

to send him a second time to the press, that nothing may stand in the way of Milton. By the way, where are my dear Tom's remarks¹ which I long to have, and must have soon, or they will come too late?

Oh! you rogue! what would you give to have such a dream about Milton, as I had about a week since? I dreamed that being in a house in the city, and with much company, looking towards the lower end of the room from the upper end of it, I descried a figure which I immediately knew to be Milton's. He was very gravely, but very neatly attired in the fashion of his day, and had a countenance which filled me with those feelings that an affectionate child has for a beloved father, such, for instance, as Tom has for you. My first thought was wonder, where he could have been concealed so many years; my second, a transport of joy to find him still alive; my third, another transport to find myself in his company; and my fourth, a resolution to accost him. I did so, and he received me with a complacence, in which I saw equal sweetness and dignity. I spoke of his *Paradise Lost*, as every man must, who is worthy to speak of it at all, and told him a long story of of the manner in which it affected me, when I first discovered it, being at that time a schoolboy. He answered me by a smile and a gentle inclination of his head. He then grasped my hand affectionately, and with a smile that charmed me, said, 'Well, you for your part will do well also;' at last recollecting his great age (for I understood him to be two hundred years old), I feared that I

¹ Tom Hayley sent his 'Observations' on Cowper's Homer to Cowper on March 4. See Letter of 14th March 1793.

might fatigue him by much talking, I took my leave, and he took his with an air of the most perfect good breeding. His person, his features, his manner, were all so perfectly characteristic, that I am persuaded an apparition of him could not represent him more completely. This may be said to have been one of the dreams of Pindus, may it not ?

How truly I rejoice that you have recovered Guy ; that man won my heart the moment I saw him ; give my love to him, and tell him I am truly glad he is alive again.

There is much sweetness in those lines from the sonneteer of Avon, and not a little in dear Tom's, —an earnest, I trust, of good things to come.

With Mary's kind love, I must now conclude self, my dear brother, ever yours, LIPPUS.¹

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

1 March 1793.

DEAR SIR,—If it shall please God to deliver me from these bonds of despair which I have now endured so long that they have entered into my soul, and seem to have become one substance with it, I shall indeed, more than any man, have cause to exalt and praise the efficacious intercession of the Mediator. God grant me in His due time to experience it.

The last night was the worst I have had since I wrote last. I was visited with a horrible dream in which I seemed to be taking a final leave of my dwelling, and every object with which I have been most familiar, on the evening before my execution.

¹ In allusion to his inflamed eyes. Lippus, Lat. = blear-eyed.

I felt the tenderest regret at the separation, and looked about for something durable to carry with me as a memorial. The iron hasp of the garden-door presenting itself, I was on the point of taking that, but recollecting that the heat of the fire in which I was going to be tormented would fuse the metal, and that it would therefore only serve to increase my insupportable misery, I left it.—I then awoke in all the horror with which the reality of such circumstances would fill me.

My nights, however, in general have been quiet lately, though there has been nothing of God in any of them, except a notice or two, which I hope were from himself.

‘. . . I promise thee much, without fear, and more than thou canst bear.

‘To be glorious is to be near to Thee, and that glory is mine.’

The quarterly remittance¹ is ready, whenever it will suit you to call for it.

Mrs. Unwin is much as usual, or perhaps a little better in some respects. Her appetite and her sleep seem both increased, which is to be ascribed, I suppose, to her use of Tar-water.—I am, dr. Sir,
sincerely yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

Weston, March 4, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Since I received your last I have been much indisposed, very blind, and very

¹ Under ‘Dona Dei,’ at the end of his *Diary*, Teedon has: ‘1793, March 2, Mrs. Unwin £6, 10s. 0d. He received his ‘quaterage,’ as he called it, four times in 1793, but was in daily fear lest it should be discontinued.

busy. But I have not suffered all these evils at one and the same time. While the winter lasted I was miserable with a fever on my spirits; when the spring began to approach I was seized with an inflammation in my eyes; and ever since I have been able to use them, have been employed in giving more last touches to Homer, who is on the point of going to the press again.

Though you are Tory I believe, and I am Whig, our sentiments concerning the madcaps of France are much the same. They are a terrible race, and I have a horror both of them and their principles. Tacitus is certainly living now, and the quotations you sent me can be nothing but extracts from some letter of his to yourself.—Yours sincerely,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

The Lodge, Wednesday, March 13, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am obliged to you for all the trouble you have had in finding out Mr. Park, and in furnishing him with a set of my poems. Not having heard from him, I began to suspect that more important business had put this from your memory.

Still I am occupied with Homer, and still find a variety of alterations wanted, and many improvements practicable. I have this moment finished the twelfth book of the *Iliad*. My progress would be less tardy had I more leisure, but I can only work before breakfast; at least it seldom happens that I find any other opportunity. I proposed a question in my last, of which you in your last take no notice. At whose cost are the variations from the first

edition to be printed? It will be an affair of some expense, for I have filled a half quire on both sides with those of the first eleven books of the *Iliad* only. The *Odyssey*, I know, will want less amendment, but the whole, I suppose, will cost more than either Johnson or I shall choose to present to our customers. Will that be expected?

I am bound to thank you for preventing Johnson from sending me that bundle of Criticisms. I have seen enow of them, and have been vexed enough by some of them to be well contented with ignorance of the rest. Dr. Maty,¹ who I know is dead, was much offended that I refused to submit my copy to his revisal, and abused my specimen for it shamefully. He, I suppose, has bequeathed his resentment to the present managers of the *English Review*, and therefore they abuse me too as becomes faithful representatives of the angry Testator. Mr. Greatheed² had given me an account of this attack before yours reached me, and was of opinion that the manifest virulence of it, as well as the loose and unskilful criticism, would rather do me service. So let that rest, and the *Critical Review*, which I have not seen, rest with it. In that work, I believe, I have always been abused. My first volume at least was sufficiently mauled in it.

There is a certain author in the world whom I am not allowed to name, whose chief luxury is to give stabs in the dark to his brother authors. When Hayley read the *Monthly Review* of my work, he ascribed it confidently to him, for he knows his manner, having been grossly traduced by him him-

¹ He died in 1787. See vol. ii. pp. 453, 456, and vol. iii. pp. 7 and 35.

² Rev. Samuel Greatheed of Newport Pagnell.

self. For he detected him, and by a menace to expose him on the stage, put him to silence. Peace to them all! They shall trouble me no more.

I wish much to know the amount of what Johnson purposes to allow me as the average profits of an edition of my poems. For I shall presently want money, and be afraid to draw for it, unless I know that my bank in his hands is responsible. I should imagine that the £46 I drew for cannot have exhausted it.

We were much concerned for Mrs. Rose's mishap, and shall be heartily glad to learn that she has recovered from the consequences of it. Our love attends you all. We are as well as usual.

I am desired to say that the bacon when you get it will not be so salt nor so fit for use as Mrs. U. wishes you may find it, in less than six months after you receive it. Adieu.—Sincerely yours,

W.M. COWPER.

Thanks for gold-pin—exactly what we wished.

The next letter is to Hayley's son Tom, who, at Cowper's request, passed some criticisms on the Homer. Tom objected to several expressions, and convicted Cowper of a bull. 'In line 300' (Bk. xviii.) you say, 'no one sat,' and in 304 'Polydamas rose.'

TO THOMAS HAYLEY

Weston, March 14, 1793.

MY DEAR LITTLE CRITIC,—I thank you heartily for your observations, on which I set a higher value, because they have instructed me as much, and have entertained me more than all the other strictures

of our public judges in these matters. Perhaps I am not much more pleased with *shameless wolf*, etc., than you. But what is to be done, my little man ? Coarse as the expressions are, they are no more than equivalent to those of Homer. The invective of the ancients was never tempered with good manners, as your papa can tell you ; and my business, you know, is, not to be more polite than my author, but to represent him as closely as I can.

Dishonoured foul I have wiped away, for the reason you give, which is a very just one, and the present reading is this,

Who had dared dishonour thus
The life itself, etc.

Your objection to *kindler of the fires of Heaven* I had the good fortune to anticipate, and expunged the dirty ambiguity some time since, wondering not a little that I had ever admitted it.

The fault you find with the first two verses of Nestor's speech discovers such a degree of just discernment, that but for your papa's assurance to the contrary, I must have suspected *him* as the author of that remark : much as I should have respected it, if it had been so, I value it, I assure you, my little friend, still more as yours. In the new edition the passage will be found thus altered,

Alas ! great sorrow falls on Greece to-day,
Priam, and Priam's sons, with all in Troy—
Oh ! how will they exult, and in their hearts
Triumph, once hearing of the broil between
The prime of Greece, in council, and in arms.

Where the word *reel* suggests to you the idea of a drunken mountain, it performs the service to which I destined it. It is a bold metaphor ; but justified

by one of the sublimest passages in scripture, compared with the sublimity of which even that of Homer suffers humiliation.

It is God himself, who speaking, I think, by the prophet Isaiah, says,¹

‘The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard.’

With equal boldness in the same scripture, the poetry of which was never equalled, mountains are said to skip,² to break out into singing, and the fields to clap their hands.³ I intend, therefore, that my Olympus shall be still tipsy.

The accuracy of your last remark, in which you convicted me of a bull, delights me. A fig for all critics but you! The blockheads could not find it. It shall stand thus,

First spake Polydamas——

Homer was more upon his guard, than to commit such a blunder, for he says,

$\eta\rho\chi'$ ἀγορεύειν.

And now, my dear little censor, once more accept my thanks. I only regret that your strictures are so few, being just and sensible as they are.

Tell your papa that he shall hear from me soon; accept mine, and my dear invalid's affectionate remembrances.—Ever yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

14 Mar. 1793.

DEAR SIR,—The verses⁴ which I enclose may be more worth your reading, and are likely to be so,

¹ Isaiah xxiv. 20.

² Psalms cxiv. 6.

³ ‘The trees of the field shall clap their hands.’—Isaiah lv. 12.

⁴ ‘1793, March 14.—I red. the verses *Mortuary* and a Letter from the Esqr.’—*Teedon's Diary*.

than any letter that I can send you; for them I have written as if all were well within, but have nothing to say in prose but what you have too often heard already. I continue much in the same state as when I saw you, except that my waking this morning was very distressful. A temporary suspension of terror was audibly announced to me some time since, and, except in one or two instances, has been fulfilled; but in other respects I perceive no difference. Neither waking nor sleeping have I any communications from God, but am perfectly a withered tree, fruitless and leafless. A consciousness that He exists, that once He favoured me, but that I have offended to the forfeiture of all such mercies, is ever present with me, and of such thoughts consists the whole of my religious experience.—I am sincerely yours, Wm. COWPER.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, March 19, 1793.

MY DEAREST BROTHER,—I wrote to your dear little boy, and hope that you have accepted that letter in part of payment, for I am so busy every morning before breakfast (my only opportunity), strutting and stalking in Homeric stilts, that you ought to account it an instance of marvellous grace and favour, that I condescend to write even to you. Sometimes I am seriously almost crazed with the multiplicity and magnitude of the matters before me, and the little or no time that I have for them; and sometimes I repose myself after the fatigue of that distraction on the pillow of despair; a pillow which has often served me in time of need, and is

become, by frequent use, if not very comfortable, at least convenient. So reposed, I laugh at the world, and say, ‘Yes, you may gape and expect both Homer and Milton from me, but I'll be hanged if ever you get them.’

In Homer you must know I am advanced as far as the fifteenth book of the *Iliad*, leaving nothing behind me that can reasonably offend the most fastidious; and I design him for public appearance in his new dress as soon as possible, for a reason which any poet may guess, if he will but thrust his hand into his pocket.

Johnson gives me £200 for this second edition, which is to consist of 750 copies only, and the copyright still remains in me. But I suppose I have told you this six times already; repetition is a vice that I begin to perceive myself rather in danger of.

Three days ago I received a swinging packet by the post. Oh ho, says I, it is come at last. This can be nothing less than an appointment to some good place under government. Here are the Royal arms, and the bulk of it is promising to a degree that may fairly encourage the most flattering expectations. It must be so, says Mary, and comes from Lord Thurlow. So I opened it and found Mrs. Smith's poem. Now you may imagine that I was mortified by this discovery, but I can assure you that I was not. For since had it actually been what I supposed, and had I seen it with these eyes, I should not have believed it, I found myself very easily let down from my imaginary exaltation to the vale of poverty again. I have told you that it arrived three days ago, and now I must tell you that I have not yet had time to read it, but must tell

you also that I will read it as soon as I can, and should anything in the shape of a feasible improvement offer, will be sure to suggest it. That is to say, I will suggest the matter of it, but am inclined to think that it will be unversified, both because I have no time at all for anything but my own business, and because I have always found it impracticable to patch my own upon another's, so as to give satisfaction.

You forbid me to tantalise you with an invitation to Weston, and yet, with almost a Frenchman's barbarity, invite me to Earham!—No! no! there is no such happiness in store for me at present. Had I rambled at all, I was under promise to all my dear mother's kindred to go to Norfolk, and they are dying to see me; but I have told them, that die they must, for I cannot go; and ergo, as you will perceive, can go no where else.

Thanks for Mazarin's¹ epitaph! it is full of witty paradox, and is written with a force and severity which sufficiently bespeak the author. I account it an inestimable curiosity, and shall be happy when time shall serve, with your aid, to make a good translation of it. But that will be a stubborn business. Adieu! My dearest Hayley, Mary sends her best love. The clock strikes eight; and now for Homer.—Ever yours, W. C.

Johnson has not yet sent me the wished-for parcel from Mrs. Smith. He keeps everything of the sort as he did your letter. Hang him.

P.S.—I have always forgot to tell you that Mr. Newton is not the man who almost quarrelled with

¹ Cardinal Mazarin (1602-1661), Minister of State to Louis XIII.

me for connecting myself with your antivirginityship.¹ The feud, however, is composed. Still another *P.S.*—Have this moment received yours. Your little man was well entitled to all the pleasure my praise could yield him. I left off fencing when one of my eyes had been almost poked out, and hope that you will now do the same. Mr. B. sent me a very obliging note telling me that he does not frank, but that his friend Mr. Freeling has offered the use of his name.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

March 22, 1793.

DEAR SIR,—The suspension of terrible wakings is over, and their return was announced to me about three days since in these words :—

‘I have got my old wakings again.’

If they continue, they will completely disqualify me for all sorts of writing. It was owing to them that I was idle all the winter, which has thrown me behind to such a degree, that I am now always in a hurry. In short, I find so little done in answer to so many prayers, and for the accomplishment of so many promises, of which I have now almost four quarto volumes, that I am perfectly at a loss to understand the dispensation. The peace of three persons at least is concerned, and yet all remains as it was. Many years I have been threatened with a season worse than all the past, a season that shall be fatal and final; and still I am threatened with such a season. My only hope is founded in Mrs. Unwin’s acceptableness with God, and yours. For as to my own, unconnected with my interest in her

¹ It was the Rev. Walter Bagot. See Letters of 1st December 1792 and 28th December 1792.

prayers and yours, I have too mean an opinion of it to suppose that I can build at all upon it.

In the winter I expected to be crushed before spring, and now I expect to be crushed before winter. 'Twere better never to have been born than to live such a life of terrible expectation.—I am, dear Sir, sincerely yours, with Mrs. Unwin's kind remembrances,

W.M. C.

TO LADY HESKETH

No date, but probably March 1793.¹

MY DEAREST COZ,—Having had my old friend the fever for a bed fellow, and very little sleep in consequence since four this morning, I must not be expected to be very bright; but to make amends, I shall perhaps send you a letter that will brighten you, quickening and animating you into another fit of scolding when you shall learn from it how contrary I go to your injunctions. The verses you commanded me to send to Lady Jane I send to you, not daring to write once to her, lest I should be obliged to write twice, and so on for ever. Had I leisure to undertake a new correspondence, which is far from being the case, I am not qualified for any such intercourse with her, being affected always with the same awkward constraint when I write, as when I speak, to a stranger. Two or three times I have resolved to do it, through an ardent desire to fulfil your will and pleasure, and as often my heart has failed me. Therefore to decide the matter

¹ On March 16, 1793, Teedon writes in his diary:—‘Went to the Esqr’s., and found the study and room over it under reparation.’ So I think this letter belongs to March 1793.

finally, I send them as I said, to you, leaving it at the disposal of your inclinations, either to invent such handsome things for me as I ought to have said myself on the occasion, or to say nothing, as to you shall seem good. Johnny is the copyist, for to me it was not possible to find time for the purpose.

I am sorry that thou wast so much disappointed at the departure of my portrait from London, but can tell thee to thy inexpressible comfort, that the opportunity of showing it at the exhibition was lost only by a day or two. Johnny wrote to ask my consent; I graciously gave it; he transmitted it to Abbot; but before all this could be done the time was elapsed in which, according to the rules of the Academy, the picture could be admitted. The public therefore will never see it, a matter which, to say the truth, gives me no concern, but rather pleasure, for my compliance was hardly voluntary, but much more an extorted one by the desire I felt to gratify both the painter and Johnny, at least not to mortify them by a refusal.

I dine this day with the Courtenays, with the Jacobin as you account him, but with the Whig as I know him and you will surely find him to be, if you ever converse with him on the subject.

But how has it happened that I have proceeded thus far without a syllable on the subject next my heart, your intention of visiting us before you go to Cheltenham? Set it down to the account of a chaotic brain made such by want of sleep. Thou hast thy revenge. If thou wast mortified because the public will not see me upon canvas, how much more am I mortified, dost thou think, and Mrs.

Unwin, that our house is, and will be till Michas., in a state altogether unpropitious to thy purpose? I thought to have kept the affair a secret, that I might have had the pleasure of surprising thee agreeably, but it must come out. Know then that my study is in a state of thorough repair, not a stick of the old room remains, but everything is completely new, and when finished it will be far the smartest room in the neighbourhood. This business has not been begun too soon, for the great beam in the ceiling was found so perfectly rotten that it must have fallen. In consequence of this manœuvre the parlour is the only room left us, and must be so for many weeks to come, since the new walls cannot be dried and painted sooner. Thou art both kind and ingenious; if thou canst away with the inconvenience of a single room for all, or canst suggest any expedient, thou knowest how happy we shall be to receive thee!

Many thanks for Cath. Maria's note, so flattering to me. Lord Orford¹ seems to have passed the time of life when poets succeed in complimenting the ladies.

I cannot believe that Mrs. Smith has ever been paid by a party. Since we were at Earham, she has, I know, been distressed to the last degree, has had her goods seized by one landlord and the door of her new lodging shut against her by another. Neither did Hayley write *Desmond*;² nor has he written anything that goes by her name, nor is Hayley the author of *Man as He Is*,³ at least I think

¹ Horace Walpole, the famous letter-writer, Earl of Orford, to which title he succeeded in 1791. He died in 1797.

² By Charlotte Smith; published in 1792.

³ A novel by Robert Bage, published in 1792. It was followed in 1796 by *Hermstrong: or, Man as He is Not*. See letter of 21st May 1793.

he would have told me if he had, from whom he says he can keep nothing, not even murther should he commit it. But conjecture is a great part of the world's employment, and where it is harmless, as in these instances, is an employment that one need not grudge them. Hayley, I can assure thee, nay, I believe I have done that already, is no more a Democrat than I am, but a man in love with liberty to the very core. Kings and Queens suspect all such; but why shouldst thou, who art neither? I am no oppositionist, heaven knows, unless he can be one who opposes nobody, but leaves all such matters to take their course as they may. I have even a great respect for Mr. Pitt: Johnny will speak for himself. Mrs. Unwin, much as usual, unites in best wishes and warmest remembrances with Thine ever,

W. C.

P.S.—Thou wilt wonder at our dulness when I tell thee that we read his Lordship's verses without discovering the joke, nor had I discovered it when I wrote this letter. But my neighbour Courtenay, to whom I showed them, found it at once. I am not sure, however, that I am more pleased with them even now.

An epigram is but a feeble thing
With straw in tail, stuck there by way of sting.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Weston, March 27, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I must send you a line of congratulation on the event of your transaction with Johnson, since you, I know, partake with me in the pleasure I receive from it. Few of my concerns

have been so happily concluded. I am now satisfied with my bookseller, as I have substantial cause to be, and account myself in good hands; a circumstance as pleasant to me as any other part of my business; for I love dearly to be able to confide with all my heart in those with whom I am connected, of what kind soever the connection may be.

The question of printing or not printing the alterations seems difficult to decide. If they are not printed, I shall perhaps disoblige some purchasers of the first edition; and if they are, many others of them, perhaps a great majority, will never care about them. As far as I have gone I have made a fair copy, and when I have finished the whole, will send them to Johnson, together with the interleaved volumes. He will see in a few minutes what it will be best to do, and by his judgment I shall be determined. The opinion to which I most incline is, that they ought to be printed separately, for they are many of them rather long, here and there a whole speech, or a whole simile, and the verbal and lineal variations are so numerous, that altogether, I apprehend, they will give a new air to the work, and I hope a much improved one.

I forgot to say in the proper place that some notes, although but very few, I have added already, and may perhaps see here and there opportunity for a few more. But notes being little wanted, especially by people at all conversant with classical literature, as most readers of Homer are, I am persuaded that, were they numerous, they would be deemed an incumbrance. I shall write to Johnson soon, perhaps to-morrow, and then shall say the same thing to him. In point of health we continue much the

same. Our united love, and many thanks for your prosperous negotiations, attend yourself and whole family, and especially my little namesake. Adieu,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL

March 29, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Your tidings concerning the slender pittance, yet to come, are, as you observe, of the melancholy cast. Not being gifted by nature with the means of acquiring much, it is well, however, that she has given me a disposition to be contented with little. I have now been so many years habituated to small matters, that I should probably find myself incommoded by greater; and may I but be enabled to shift, as I have been hitherto, unsatisfied wishes will never trouble me much. My pen has helped me somewhat; and, after some years' toil, I begin to reap the benefit. Had I begun sooner, perhaps I should have known fewer pecuniary distresses; or—who can say?—it is possible that I might not have succeeded so well. Fruit ripens only a short time before it rots; and man, in general, arrives not at maturity of mental powers at a much earlier period. I am now busied in preparing Homer for his second appearance. An author should consider himself as bound not to please himself, but the public; and so far as the good pleasure of the public may be learned from the critics, I design to accommodate myself to it. The Latinisms, though employed by Milton, and numbered by Addison among the arts and expedients by which he has given dignity to his style, I shall render into plain English; the rougher lines,

though my reason for using them has never been proved a bad one, so far as I know, I shall make perfectly smooth; and shall give body and substance to all that is in any degree feeble and flimsy. And when I have done all this, and more, if the critics still grumble, I shall say the very deuce is in them. Yet, that they will grumble, I make no doubt; for, unreasonable as it is to do so, they all require something better than Homer, and that something they will certainly never get from me.

As to the canal¹ that is to be my neighbour, I hear little about it. The Courtenays of Weston have nothing to do with it, and I have no intercourse with Tyringham. When it is finished, the people of these parts will have to carry their coals seven miles only, which now they bring from Northampton or Bedford, both at the distance of fifteen. But, as Balaam says, who shall live when these things are done?² It is not for me, a sexagenarian already, to expect that I shall. The chief objection to canals in general seems to be that, multiplying as they do, they are likely to swallow the coasting trade.

I cannot tell you the joy I feel at the disappointment of the French;³ pitiful mimics of Spartan and Roman virtue, without a grain of it in their whole character.—Ever yours,

W.M. COWPER.

¹ The Grand Junction Canal, cut in 1805. It passes through Stantonbury, seven miles to the south of Olney.

² ‘Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!’—Numbers xxiv. 23.

³ Referring, no doubt, to the quarrel between the Girondins and the extreme Republicans—‘the Mountain.’ Then, on March 18th occurred the battle of Neerwinden, where Dumouriez was defeated, and the retreat of the French from Holland.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

30 March, 1793.

DEAR SIR,—Lest I should not see you to-day, and that you may not be perfectly in the dark about me, I send you a hasty line merely to say that no alteration occurs in my experience either for better or worse. My nights have perhaps on the whole been less troubled than sometimes they are, though I have rarely slept free from the influences of Satan, or unmenaced with misery at hand. Last night I dreamed that Dr. Kerr prescribed Death to me as the only preventive of madness. My spirits, however, have been tolerably well in the day, for I keep myself as much employed as I can, which together with the assistance I gain from despair, is my best remedy.—I remain, sincerely yrs,

W.M. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

10 April, 1793.

DEAR SIR,—You have perhaps thought it long since I wrote, but I could not easily write sooner. My writing time is all engrossed by Homer. Neither have I had anything to communicate worth your knowledge. Either I must have told you what would have distressed you, or have seemed to say nothing to the purpose; for my experience since you were here has either been flat and without anything to mark it, or of the painful kind, rather less, however, of the latter kind than usual.

I shall be glad indeed to see and feel the performance of your notice of this day. To have my hands set at liberty for Milton, will not only free me

from the apprehensions of non performance, but will comfort me likewise as a pretty clear authentication of your notices on much more important subjects. As soon as Homer is finished, and I hope he will be finished by the end of May, I must put the promise to the proof.

Adieu. With our united thanks for your prayers,
I remain, sincerely yours, Wm. COWPER.

I did not perceive till too late that this paper was written on.¹

TO JOHN JOHNSON

The Lodge, April 11, 1793.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,—The long muster-roll of my great and small ancestors² I signed, and dated, and sent up to Mr. Blue-mantle, on Monday, according to your desire. Such a pompous affair, drawn out for my sake, reminds me of the old fable of the mountain in parturition, and a mouse the produce. Rest undisturbed, say I, their lordly, ducal, and royal dust! Had they left me something handsome, I should have respected them more. But perhaps they did not know that such a one as I should have the honour to be numbered among their descendants! Well! I have a little bookseller that makes me some amends for their deficiency. He has made me a present;—an act of

¹ At right angles to the writing on this letter was the memorandum :—

² Cowper was descended 'by four different lines' from Henry III., King of England. See his poem, *On the Receipt of my Mother's Picture*:-

'My boast is not that I deduce my birth
From loins enthroned and rulers of the earth ;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise—
The son of parents passed into the skies.'

liberality which I take every opportunity to blazon, as it well deserves. But you, I suppose, have learned it already from Mr. Rose.

Fear not, my man. You will acquit yourself very well, I dare say, both in standing for your degree, and when you have gained it. A little tremor, and a little shamefacedness in a stripling, like you, are recommendations rather than otherwise; and so they ought to be, being symptoms of an ingenuous mind rather unfrequent in this age of brass.

What you say of your determined purpose, with God's help, to take up the Cross, and despise the shame, gives us both real pleasure. In our pedigree is found one¹ at least who did it before you. Do you the like, and you will meet him in heaven, as sure as the Scripture is the word of God.

The quarrel that the world has with evangelic men and doctrines, they would have with a host of angels in the human form: for it is the quarrel of owls with sunshine; of ignorance with divine illumination.

Adieu, my dear Johnny! We shall expect you with earnest desire of your coming, and receive you with much delight.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, April 23, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER,—Better late than never, and better a little than none at all! Had I been at liberty to consult my inclinations, I would have answered your truly kind and affec-

¹ Dr. Donne, Dean of St. Paul's.

tionate letter immediately. But I am the busiest man alive: and when the epistle is despatched, you will be the only one of my correspondents to whom I shall not be indebted. While I write this, my poor Mary sits mute, which I cannot well bear,¹ and which, together with want of time to write much, will have a curtailing effect on my epistle.

My only studying time is still given to Homer, not to correction and amendment of him (for that is all over), but to writing notes. Johnson has expressed a wish for some, that the unlearned may be a little illuminated concerning classical story and the mythology of the ancients; and his behaviour to me has been so liberal, that I can refuse him nothing. Poking into the old Greek commentators blinds me. But it is no matter;—I am the more like Homer.—Ever yours, my dearest Hayley,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

April 25, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Had it not been stipulated between us that, being both at present pretty much engrossed by business, we should write when opportunity offers, I should be frightened at the date of your last: but you will not judge me, I know, by the unfrequency of my letters, nor suppose that my thoughts about you are equally unfrequent. In truth, they are not. No day passes in which you are excluded from them. I am so busy that I do not expect even now to fill my paper. While I

¹ ‘1793, April 13,—I went and drank tea with the Esq., who was in the very depths of despair and darkness. The Lord turn it to light.’—*Teedon’s Diary.*

write, my poor invalid, who is still unable to amuse herself either with book or needle, sits silent at my side; which makes me, in all my letters, hasten to a conclusion. My only time for study is now before breakfast; and I lengthen it as much as I can by rising early.

I know not that, with respect to our health, we are either better or worse than when you saw us. Mrs. Unwin, perhaps, has gained a little strength; and the advancing spring, I hope, will add to it. As to myself, I am, in body, soul, and spirit, *semper idem*. Prayer, I know, is made for me; and sometimes with great enlargement of heart, by those who offer it: and in this circumstance consists the only evidence I can find that God is still favourably mindful of me, and has not cast me off for ever.

A long time since, I received a parcel from Dr. Cogswell,¹ of New York; and, looking on the reverse of the packing-paper, saw there an address to you. I conclude, therefore, that you received it first, and at his desire transmitted it to me; consequently you are acquainted with him, and probably apprised of the nature of our correspondence. About three years ago I had his first letter to me, which came accompanied by half a dozen American publications. He proposed an exchange of books on religious subjects, as likely to be useful on both sides of the water. Most of those he sent, however, I had seen before. I sent him, in return, such as I could get; but felt myself indifferently qualified for such a negotiation. I am now called upon to contribute my quota again; and shall be obliged to you if, in your next, you will mention the titles of half

¹ See Letter of 15th June 1791.

a dozen that may be procured at little cost, that are likely to be new in that country, and useful.

About two months since, I had a letter from Mr. Jeremiah Waring, of Alton in Hampshire. Do you know such a man? I think I have seen his name in advertisements of mathematical works. He is, however, or seems to be, a very pious man, though I suspect him, whatever he may be in mathematical matters, in religious but a novice. He writes indeed as if he was of the perfectionist tribe, and speaks of very great apprehensions that he has lest the cause of the Gospel should suffer by Mr. Van Lier's letters.¹ He finds great fault with them on the score of that confidence with which the writer speaks of his election to eternal life, and is as little pleased with the conflicts he confesses that he still has with the powers of darkness; not conceiving it possible that if he were indeed a Christian, he could have any conflicts at all. I answered him as well as I could, and have heard no more of him; but wished that you had to satisfy him rather than I.

I was a little surprised lately, seeing in the last *Gentleman's Magazine* a letter from somebody at Winchester, in which is a copy of the epitaph of our poor friend Unwin;—an English, not a Latin one. It has been pleasant to me sometimes to think, that his dust lay under an inscription of my writing; which I had no reason to doubt, because the Latin one, which I composed at the request of the executors, was as I understood from Mr. H. Thornton, accepted by them, and approved. If they thought, after all, that an English one, as more intelligible, would therefore be preferable, I believe they judged

¹ See Letter of 14th June 1790.

wisely; but having never heard that they had changed their mind about it, I was at a loss to account for the alteration.

So now, my dear friend, adieu!—When I have thanked you for a barrel of oysters, and added our united kind remembrances to yourself and Miss Catlett, I shall have exhausted the last moment that I can spare at present.—I remain sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

26 April 1793.

DEAR SIR,—Your experiences have a difference in them. If you are cast down, you are comforted and raised again. But as for mine, they proceed in one dull train, unvaried, unless sometimes by darker shades than usual. Thus it has happened to me since I saw you. During two days I rejected entirely all your notices, and if I have since experienced some little degree of belief in them, it has not been on account of the smallest encouragement, for I have received none; but perhaps because the temptation to cast them away is abated.

I have nothing farther to add respecting my state of mind, which hardly ever affords me a new subject or anything worth communicating. It seems strange, however, that the prayers and promises of some years should remain still so entirely unanswered and unaccomplished.

We are much as usual in our health, and with our united thanks for your spiritual services,—I remain, dear Sir, yours sincerely,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

Weston, May 4, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—While your sorrow for our common loss¹ was fresh in your mind, I would not write, lest a letter on so distressing a subject should be too painful both to you and me; and now that I seem to have reached a proper time for doing it, the multiplicity of my literary business will hardly afford me leisure. Both you and I have this comfort when deprived of those we love,—at our time of life we have every reason to believe that the deprivation cannot be long. Our sun is setting too; and when the hour of rest arrives we shall rejoin your brother, and many whom we have tenderly loved, our forerunners into a better country.

I will say no more on a theme which it will be better perhaps to treat with brevity; and because the introduction of any other might seem a transition too violent, I will only add that Mrs. Unwin and I are about as well as we at any time have been within the last year.—Truly yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

May 5, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—My delay to answer your last kind letter, to which likewise you desired a speedy reply, must have seemed rather difficult to explain on any other supposition than that of illness; but illness has not been the cause, although

¹ Death of Mr. Charles Chester [formerly Bagot] of Chicheley Hall. See vol. ii. p. 284, and Globe Ed., p. 383, for Cowper's 'Epitaph on Mr. Chester of Chicheley.'

to say the truth, I cannot boast of having been lately very well. Yet has not this been the cause of my silence, but your own advice, very proper and earnestly given to me, to proceed in the revisal of Homer. To this it is owing that instead of giving an hour or two before breakfast to my correspondence, I allot that time entirely to my studies. I have nearly given the last touches to the poetry, and am now busied far more laboriously in writing notes at the request of my honest bookseller, transmitted to me in the first instance by you, and afterwards repeated by himself. I am therefore deep in the old Scholia, and have advanced to the latter part of *Iliad* nine, explaining, as I go, such passages as may be difficult to unlearned readers, and such only; for notes of that kind are the notes that Johnson desired. I find it a more laborious task than the translation was, and shall be heartily glad when it is over. In the meantime all the letters I receive remain unanswered, or if they receive an answer, it is always a short one. Such this must be. Johnny is here, having flown over London.

Homer I believe will make a much more respectable appearance than before. Johnson now thinks it will be right to make a separate impression of the amendments.

W. C.

I breakfast every morning on seven or eight pages of the Greek commentators. For so much I am obliged to read in order to select perhaps three or four short notes for the readers of my translation.

Homer is indeed a tie upon me that must not on any account be broken, till all his demands are satisfied; though I have fancied while the revisal of the *Odyssey* was at a distance, that it would ask less labour in the finishing, it is not unlikely that, when I take it actually in hand, I may find myself mistaken. Of this at least I am sure, that uneven verse abounds much more in it than it once did in the *Iliad*, yet to the latter the critics objected on that account, though to the former never; perhaps because they had not read it. Hereafter they shall not quarrel with me on that score. The *Iliad* is now all smooth turnpike, and I will take equal care that there shall be no jolts in the *Odyssey*.

TO LADY HESKETH

The Lodge, May 7, 1793.

MY DEAREST COZ,—YOU HAVE THOUGHT ME LONG SILENT, AND SO HAVE MANY OTHERS. IN FACT I HAVE NOT FOR MANY MONTHS WRITTEN PUNCTUALLY TO ANY BUT YOURSELF AND HAYLEY. MY TIME, THE LITTLE I HAVE, IS SO ENgrossed BY HOMER, THAT I HAVE AT THIS MOMENT A BUNDLE OF UNANSWERED LETTERS BY ME, AND LETTERS LIKELY TO BE SO. THOU KNOWEST, I DARE SAY, WHAT IT IS TO HAVE A HEAD WEARY WITH THINKING. MINE IS SO FATIGUED BY BREAKFAST TIME, THREE DAYS OUT OF FOUR, I AM UTTERLY INCAPABLE OF SITTING DOWN TO MY DESK AGAIN FOR ANY PURPOSE WHATEVER.

I AM GLAD I HAVE CONVINCED THEE AT LAST THAT THOU ART A TORY. YOUR FRIEND'S DEFINITION OF WHIG AND TORY MAY BE JUST FOR AUGHT I KNOW, AS FAR

as the latter are concerned; but respecting the former, I think him mistaken. There is no TRUE Whig who wishes all power in the hands of his own party. The division of it, which the lawyers call tripartite, is exactly what he desires; and he would have neither Kings, Lords, nor Commons unequally trusted, or in the smallest degree predominant. Such a Whig am I, and such Whigs are the true friends of the constitution.

Adieu! my dear, I am dead with weariness.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

11 May, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I write to save you trouble, the trouble of calling on Johnson for my interest due at Midsummer, which I shall have occasion to receive here, and shall draw on him for the whole amount.

In a few days you will have a call from an honest Quaker, with whom I deal for sugar made by freemen, and other groceries. His demand will be, I imagine, for about £5 or £6, which, if I mistake not, you have a modicum of mine in your hands to satisfy.

On Monday evening next you will receive a female visitor, whom we beg to introduce to your acquaintance, in the shape of a goose. Accept her kindly, together with our wishes that she may be very agreeable. She will travel by the Wellingborough diligence.

I expect my Johnny this evening from Cambridge. Poor fellow, he is in great distress, through fear of losing his curacy at Dereham. An idle person neglected to enter him in his college at the proper

time, and the consequence is that he cannot be ordained till next September, for want of college testimonials, which he cannot demand sooner. His rector, he expects, will in the mean time put in another curate. I applied to my good and trusty cousin the Bishop of Bristol, who I hoped, at my request and recommendation, would have given him orders without insisting upon that preliminary. But not so. I have his answer this morning, in which he begs to be excused ; so poor Johnny will have nothing to do, but to mourn over his disappointment, which I dare say he will do much and long, for it is a very bitter one, and we shall mourn with him.

I breakfast every morning on seven or eight folio pages of the Greek commentators, for so much I am obliged to read in order to select, perhaps three or four short notes for the readers of my translation. I finished the sixteenth book this morning, and so far I have accommodated my work to the demands of the critics.

Adieu. With our united love to all your family,
I remain, my dear Friend, sincerely yours,

Wm. COWPER.

News this moment arrives that the geese are not fat, and the goose's journey must therefore be put off, *sine die*.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

May 16, 1793.

DEAR SIR,—There is no text in scripture less calculated to comfort me, than that which promises comfort to the broken heart. Were there a text in

the Bible which promised it to the nether millstone, from such a text as that I might gather hope.

Your experience and mine make a series of exact contradictions. You receive assurances almost as often as you pray, of spiritual good things intended for me, and I feel in the mean time every thing that denotes a man an outcast and a reprobate. I dream in the night that God has rejected me finally, and that all promises and all answers to prayer made for me are mere delusions. I wake under a strong and clear conviction that these communications are from God, and in the course of the day nothing occurs to invalidate that persuasion. As I have said before, there is a mystery in this matter that I am not able to explain. I believe myself the only instance of a man to whom God will promise every thing and perform nothing.

Company is come in and I must conclude.—
Yours sincerely,

Wm. COWPER.

TO THOMAS PARK

May 17, 1793.

DEAR SIR,—It has not been without frequent self-reproach that I have so long omitted to answer your last very kind and most obliging letter. I am by habit and inclination extremely punctual in the discharge of such arrears, and it is only through necessity, and under constraint of various indispensable engagements of a different kind, that I am become of late much otherwise.

I have never seen Chapman's¹ translation of

¹ George Chapman (1559-1634), the dramatist, who translated Homer between 1598 and 1616. Keats's enthusiasm for that translation is naturally recalled.

Homer, and will not refuse your offer of it, unless, by accepting it, I shall deprive you of a curiosity that you cannot easily replace. The line or two which you quote from him, except that the expression ‘a well-written soul’ has the quaintness of his times in it, do him credit. He cannot surely be the same Chapman who wrote a poem, I think, on the battle of Hochstadt, in which, when I was a very young man, I remember to have seen the following lines :

‘ Think of two thousand gentlemen at least,
And each man mounted on his capering beast.
Into the Danube they were push’d by shoals,
And sunk and bobb’d, and bobb’d and sunk, and
sunk and bobb’d their souls ! ’

These are lines that could not fail to impress the memory, though not altogether in the Homeric style of battle.

I am, as you say, a hermit, and probably an irreclaimable one, having a horror of London that I cannot express, nor indeed very easily account for. Neither am I much less disinclined to migration in general. I did no little violence to my love of home last summer, when I paid Mr. Hayley a visit, and in truth was principally induced to the journey by a hope that it might be useful to Mrs. Unwin; who, however, derived so little benefit from it, that I purpose for the future to avail myself of the privilege my years may reasonably claim, by compelling my younger friends to visit *me*. But even this is a point which I cannot well compass at present, both because I am too busy, and because poor Mrs. Unwin is not able to bear the fatigue of company. Should better days arrive, days of more

leisure to me, and of some health to her, I shall not fail to give you notice of the change, and shall then hope for the pleasure of seeing you at Weston.

The epitaph you saw is on the tomb of the same Mr. Unwin to whom the *Tirocinium*¹ is inscribed; the son of the lady above mentioned. By the desire of his executors I wrote a Latin one, which they approved, but it was not approved by a relation of the deceased, and therefore was not used. He objected to the mention I had made in it of his mother having devoted him to the service of God in his infancy. She did it, however, and not in vain, as I wrote in my epitaph. Who wrote the English one I know not.

The poem called *The Slave* is not mine, nor have I ever seen it. I wrote two on the subject—one entitled *The Negro's Complaint*, and the other *The Morning Dream*. With thanks for all your kindness, and the patience you have with me,—I remain, dear Sir, sincerely yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY.

Weston, May 21, 1793.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—You must either think me extremely idle, or extremely busy, that I have made your last very kind letter wait so long for an answer. The truth however is, that I am neither; but have had time enough to have scribbled to you, had I been able to scribble at all. To explain this riddle I must give you a short account of my proceedings.

I rise at six every morning, and fag till near eleven, when I breakfast. The consequence is, that

¹ Published in 1784. See vol. ii. pp. 254, 273, etc.

I am so exhausted as not to be able to write, when the opportunity offers. You will say—‘Breakfast before you work, and then your work will not fatigue you.’ I answer—‘Perhaps I might, and your counsel would probably prove beneficial; but I cannot spare a moment for eating in the early part of the morning, having no other time for study.’ This weariness of which I complain is a proof that I am somewhat stricken in years; and there is no other cause by which I can account for it, since I go early to bed, always between ten and eleven, and seldom fail to sleep well. Certain it is, ten years ago I could have done as much, and sixteen years ago did actually much more, without suffering fatigue, or any inconvenience from my labours. How insensibly old age steals on, and how often it is actually arrived before we suspect it! Accident alone,—some occurrence that suggests a comparison of our former with our present selves, affords the discovery. Well! it is always good to be undeceived, especially on an article of such importance.

There has been a book lately published, entitled, *Man As He Is.*¹ I have heard a high character of it, as admirably written, and am informed that for that reason, and because it inculcates Whig principles, it is by many imputed to you. I contradicted this report, assuring my informant that had it been yours, I must have known it, for that you have bound yourself to make me your father-confessor on all such wicked occasions, and not to conceal from me even a murther, should you happen to commit one.

There goes a rumour likewise which I have with

¹ See Letter to Lady Hesketh, March 1793.

equal confidence gainsaid, that Mrs. Smith wrote her *Desmond* bribed to it by the democratic party, by whom they say she is now actually supported. I could only reply to this, that I would to Heaven, for her own sake and the sake of her many children, the assertion were founded; but that there are certain circumstances in her case which are by no means symptoms of any such felicity. Others charge her political opinions to your account, and of these conjecturers there are two sorts. Some say that she is entirely under your influence, and that you are such a despot she dares not print a syllable disallowed by you. Others that you are actually the author of *Desmond*, and she the ostensible one only. What a happy man are you to be thus in the mouths of all men, and the reputed father of all that is good for anything and not avowed by its owner?

I will not trouble you, at present, to send me any more books with a view to my notes on Homer. I am not without hopes that Sir John Throckmorton, who is expected here from Venice in a short time, may bring me Villoison's edition of the *Odyssey*.¹ He certainly will, if he found it published, and that alone will be *instar omnium*.

I honour the Lord of Petworth for his repeated acts of liberality to the poor lady above mentioned, and you as much for your frequent intercessions in her favour. I am a poor rogue who have done myself but little good, and none at all to others.

Adieu, my dearest brother! Give my love to Tom, and thank him for his book, of which I believe

¹ In 1789 Mr. John Throckmorton (he had not then succeeded to the baronetcy) had presented Cowper with Villoison's edition of the *Iliad*. See Letter to Bagot, December 1789.

I need not have deprived him, intending that my readers shall detect the occult instruction contained in Homer's stories for themselves. Mary sends her loving remembrances, and Johnny, who is here, his also.—Ever yours,

W.M. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

May 25, 1793.

DEAR SIR,—Since I wrote last my days have been chequered, not with darkness and light, but with discriminated shades of darkness. In some of them I have been extremely distressed, in others, less sensible of the horrors of my condition as a man alienated entirely from the life of God, and being so, have been of course less miserable. Sometimes, indeed, I have been even cheerful, but not on account of any positive comfort. My comforts are all of the negative kind. I do not dream terrible dreams, I do not hear terrible things, and when this is the case I am not more dejected than other men, though I have always reason to be so. I have in general but little doubt that your notices will one day or other receive an accomplishment, though there are times when I cannot in any degree believe it. And when I believe it most I have little solace in doing so, because I look forward, as I have more than once told you, to a more distant day; when the transient beams in which I have rejoiced shall be all interrupted by clouds of Egyptian horror, never to be dispersed again. If I ask myself in my best moments, as I sometimes do, Am I now glad that I exist? I am forced to answer, No. Non-existence is no evil, but to exist with the least

chance of eternal misery is an evil not to be estimated. I send you my thoughts of myself and of these subjects exactly as they are, because, being so much and so fervently engaged in prayer for me, it is necessary that you should know them.—I remain, sincerely yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH

Weston, June 1, 1793.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,—You will not (you say) come to us now; and you tell us not when you will. These assignations *sine die* are such shadowy things, that I can neither grasp nor get any comfort from them. Know you not, that hope is the next best thing to enjoyment? Give us then a hope, and a determinate time for that hope to fix on, and we will endeavour to be satisfied.

Johnny is gone to Cambridge, called thither to take his degree, and is much missed by me. He is such an active little fellow in my service, that he cannot be otherwise. In three weeks, however, I shall hope to have him again for a fortnight. I have had a letter from him, containing an incident which has given birth to the following.

TO A YOUNG FRIEND,

ON HIS ARRIVING AT CAMBRIDGE WET, WHEN NO RAIN HAD
FALLEN THERE.

If Gideon's fleece, which drench'd with dew he found,
While moisture none refresh'd the herbs around,
Might fitly represent the Church endow'd
With heavenly gifts, to Heathens not allow'd :

In pledge, perhaps, of favours from on high,
 Thy locks were wet, when other locks were dry.
 Heaven grant us half the omen ! May we see,
 Not drought on others, but much dew on thee !

These are spick and span. Johnny himself has not yet seen them. By the way, he has filled your book completely ; and I will give thee a guinea if thou wilt search thy old book for a couple of songs, and two or three other pieces of which I know thou madest copies at the vicarage, and which I have lost. The songs I know are pretty good, and I would fain recover them.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

June 12, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—You promise to be content with a short line, and a short one you must have, hurried over in the little interval I have happened to find between the conclusion of my morning task and breakfast. Study has this good effect at least : it makes me an early riser, who might otherwise, perhaps, be as much given to dozing as my readers.

The scanty opportunity I have, I shall employ in telling you what you principally wish to be told—the present state of mine and Mrs. Unwin's health. In her I cannot perceive any alteration for the better ; and must be satisfied, I believe, as indeed I have great reason to be, if she does not alter for the worse. She uses the orchard-walk daily, but always supported between two, and is still unable to employ herself as formerly. But

she is cheerful, seldom in much pain, and has always strong confidence in the mercy and faithfulness of God.

As to myself, I have always the same song to sing—Well in body, but sick in spirit: sick, nigh unto death.

Seasons return, but not to me returns
God, or the sweet approach of heavenly day,
Or sight of cheering truth, or pardon seal'd,
Or joy, or hope, or Jesus' face divine;
But cloud, etc.¹

I could easily set my complaint to Milton's tone, and accompany him through the whole passage, on the subject of a blindness more deplorable than his; but time fails me.

I feel great desire to see your intended publication;² a desire which the manner in which Mr. Bull speaks of it, who called here lately, has no tendency to allay. I believe I forgot to thank you for your last poetical present: not because I was not much pleased with it, but I write always in a hurry, and in a hurry must now conclude myself, with our united love,—Yours, my dear friend, most sincerely,

WM. COWPER.

¹ *Paradise Lost*, Book III., lines 41 to 45, adapted. Milton says:—

‘Seasons return, but not to me returns
Day or the sweet approach of even or morn
Or sight of vernal bloom,’ etc.

² *Letters to a Wife*, 2 vols. 1793 (Newton's masterpiece). The Appendix, vol. ii. pp. 223 to 262, contains an account of the death of Mrs. Newton, and the poems written by Newton on the first and second anniversaries of her death. Edward FitzGerald referring to this work says: ‘His Journal to his wife contains some of the most beautiful things I ever read, fine feeling in very fine English.’

TO RICHARD PHILLIPS,¹ PRINTER AT LEICESTER

Weston Underwood, June 14, 1793.

SIR,—I see two country papers, but the *Leicester Herald* is not one of them. In neither of them, I believe, has your case been mentioned, or in the London paper which comes to me. I am therefore totally ignorant of all the circumstances of your case. Nor can I understand, had I all the intelligence on the subject that you could give me, how it would be possible for me to write any thing that would satisfy the demands of your resentment, just perhaps, and the warmer for being so, and which would not expose me to the evils by which you are so great a sufferer. A tame composition, in short, would not serve you, and a spirited and vehement one might bring me into your predicament.

It is possible too that we may differ not a little in our political sentiments. I see many evils in the administration of public affairs, which I heartily wish redressed, but by no means approve the spirit in which that redress has been sought. And if Government, insulted and threatened as it has been, and perhaps in some degree endangered, has lately exerted itself to impose some restraint on seditious

¹ Richard Phillips, afterwards Sir Richard Phillips, who was born in London, settled at Leicester in 1786. In 1790 he established *The Leicester Herald*. Besides editing this paper, he did business as a bookseller, and in 1793 was prosecuted for selling Paine's *Rights of Man*, and sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment in Leicester Jail. He subsequently removed to London, was elected Sheriff for 1808, and knighted that year. He died in 1840, in his seventy-third year. See *Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1840, and Knapp's *Life of Borrow* for the key to a famous description of Phillips in *Lavengro*.

publications, I am not the man who shall quarrel with it on that account.¹

After what I have said, it is hardly worth while to mention any other impediments. But I have at present two unwieldy works before me,—a new edition of my translation of Homer with notes, and a new edition of the poetical works of Milton;—subjects of study which turn my mind altogether away from politics, and leave me indeed no leisure for them.

Not insensible of the honour done me by your choice of me as the person whom you would wish for your poetical advocate, and in which capacity, supposing your complaint a just one, I should very willingly serve you but for the reasons mentioned,
—I remain, Sir, your obliged humble servant,

Wm. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Friday Evening, 14th June 1793.

DEAR SIR,—Being obliged to rise much earlier than my usual hour that I may gain a proper opportunity to pursue my studies, which are at present of a very laborious kind, I live a life of constant fatigue, and suffer not a little from exhausted strength and spirits. This is an additional burthen to that which I have borne so long, and which is not in the least alleviated. I had experiences last night in my sleep of the most melancholy cast, which have given a sable hue to my whole day. Neither, since I wrote last, have I for one moment felt the smallest intimation of pity or mercy.

¹ Cowper, however, did write a sonnet on behalf of Phillips. See note to the letter of 23rd June 1793.

I know not to what particular point to direct your prayers for me, unless I desire you to pray that my mind and spirits may be sufficient for the burthens imposed upon them, the removal of which seems far distant. By the burthen on my mind I mean my literary labours, and by that on my spirits the presence of the enemy's hand upon me, by which I am crushed continually. In short, my retrospect and my prospect are both so gloomy, and the hope of better days is placed so far beyond my reach, that look where I may, I see no ground of comfort.

We have company at our house, which obliges me to be short; and indeed if we had not, I am so weary of complaining and of doing it in vain, that I should feel myself obliged to come to a conclusion.

Mrs. Unwin continues as usual, and I remain,
dear Sir, sincerely yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, June 20, 1793.

DEAR architect of fine CHATEAUX in air,¹
 Worthier to stand for ever, if they could,
 Than any built of stone, or yet of wood,
 For back of royal elephant to bear ;
 O for permission from the skies to share,
 Much to my own, though little to thy good,
 With thee (not subject to the jealous mood,)
 A partnership of literary ware !

¹ Hayley had proposed that he and Cowper should together finish *The Four Ages*, a poem of which Cowper had as far back as May 1791 written thirty-eight lines. See Letter of 11th May 1791.

But I am bankrupt now ; and doom'd henceforth
To drudge, in descent dry, on others' lays ;
Bards, I acknowledge, of unequall'd worth ;
But what is commentator's happiest praise ?
That he has furnish'd lights for other eyes,
Which they, who need them, use, and then despise.

What remains for me to say on this subject, my dear brother Bard, I will say in prose. There are other impediments which I could not comprise within the bounds of a sonnet.

My poor Mary's infirm condition makes it impossible for me, at present, to engage in a work such as you propose. My thoughts are not sufficiently free, nor have I, nor can I, by any means, find opportunity. Added to it comes a difficulty which, though you are not at all aware of it, presents itself to me under a most forbidding appearance : can you guess it ?—No, not you ; neither perhaps will you be able to imagine that such a difficulty can possibly subsist. If your hair begins to bristle, stroke it down again, for there is no need why it should erect itself. It concerns me, not you. I know myself too well not to know that I am nobody in verse, unless in a corner, and alone, and unconnected in my operations. This is not owing to want of love for you, my brother, or the most consummate confidence in you ; for I have both in a degree that has not been exceeded in the experience of any friend you have, or ever had. But I am so made up—I will not enter into a metaphysical analysis of my strange composition, in order to detect the true cause of this evil ; but on a general view of the matter, I suspect that it proceeds from that shyness, which has been my effectual and almost fatal hindrance on many other important occasions : and

which I should feel, I well know, on this, to a degree, that would perfectly cripple me. No ! I shall neither do, nor attempt, anything of consequence more, unless my poor Mary get better ; nor even then, unless it should please God to give me another nature, in concert with any man. I could not, even with my own father or brother, were they now alive. Small game must serve me at present ; and till I have done with Homer and Milton, a sonnet, or some such matter, must content me. The utmost that I aspire to, and Heaven knows with how feeble a hope ! is to write at some better opportunity, and when my hands are free, *The Four Ages*. Thus I have opened my heart unto thee. .

W. C.

TO RICHARD PHILLIPS, PRINTER AT LEICESTER

Weston Underwood, June 23, 1793.

SIR,—After an attentive perusal of your printed case, and of the two letters with which you favoured me, I felt myself disposed to render you such service as I could in my way, but thought it prudent first to consult a friend of mine¹ in London, an able lawyer, and in party matters a man of great moderation. I sent him accordingly the papers containing your representation, and asked him if I might safely comply with your request. His answer is in the negative. He says, as in my letter to you I had said myself, That it is not possible I should assist you by such means, and that the attempt would certainly be inexpedient,—perhaps even dangerous. You will excuse me therefore if I abstain from all

¹ Hill.

interference,¹ and believe me, with concern for your sufferings, your obedient, humble servant,

W.M. COWPER.

P.S.—I thank you for your paper, just now received ; but since it is impossible that I should merit the favour at your hands, beg you to send no more.

TO LADY HESKETH

June 30, 1793.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,—Your seasonable supply of thirty-five pounds ten shillings is just arrived, and I sit down to my desk to thank you for it, making you a sort of unparliamentary acknowledgment : but you will not inform against me. You ought not to be surprised that I want money at the half year's end ; for where is the man who does not ? But whatever you think, never suspect that my wants are occasioned by lavish and undistinguishing bounty. Nobody is less obnoxious to that imputation than I ; you I am sure are not, who give to me. I know who is alluded to in your letter under the description of a person² who lives luxuriously at my cost. But you are misinformed, unless a pint of ale at meal times be a luxury, there are no luxuries in that man's house, I assure you ; and I can assure you besides, that whatever he has, he has it not by gift of mine : Mrs. Unwin and I are merely the medium through which the bounty passes, not the authors of it. But we administer it conscientiously, and as in the sight of God, and are the more

¹ Cowper wrote a sonnet in behalf of Mr. Phillips, but I have not been able to obtain a copy. Acting on Hill's advice, he did not publish it.

² Teedon.

scrupulous about it because it is not ours. As to the rest, we help an old woman or two whom the parish would starve if we did not ; and there is the sum total of all the eleemosynary profusion with which we are chargeable.

Our two neighbours, Praed¹ and Wrighte,² have been sometime employed in changing the face of the country around them. After their laudable example, I too am working wonders here, but on a smaller scale. I have already built one summer-house with the materials of the old study, and am building another opposite to it. Added to which I have to set the bust of Homer,³ given me by Johnny, on a pedestal worthy of it. Danger of ruin therefore seems to threaten me from this rage of improvement more than from any indiscreet acts of charity. But take courage, my cousin, the danger will be intercepted ; and with my grand climacteric at hand, I may reasonably hope to be lodged in a house that will serve me in all seasons, before the arrival of any such catastrophe.

Thou meetest with odd sort of folks in thy travels. What can Hookham possibly mean by saying that an octavo edition will hinder the sale of the quarto, which he observes is out of print ? If it is out of print, it is no longer upon sale ; and if it be no longer upon sale, the sale of it cannot be hindered. This

¹ Of Tyringham.

² Of Gayhurst.

³ This bust is now preserved in the Wilderness at Weston. The gift prompted Cowper to write the lines commencing :

‘ Kinsman beloved, and as a son, by me ! ’

See Globe Ed., p. 390. In it, to use John Johnson’s words, in a letter to his sister Catharine (6th June 1793), ‘ he laments the circumstance of his being detained by Homer, and kept from his great projected poem, *The Four Ages of Man*. ’

is logic,—as good logic at least as can be looked for from a poet, and such as would puzzle him, bookseller as he is, to answer. No, my dear, the bulk of readers are those who purchase octavos: the rich only can afford quartos, and they read nothing. My proper business therefore is to consult the inclinations of the former, who have long clamoured for an edition that they can afford to purchase.

Hayley asks in his last letter—‘How does your charming cousin, Lady Hesketh? The pleasure of conversing with her is one of the few things I regret in not visiting the great city this spring.’

It is in vain that thou counselest me to leave Weston for Norfolk. Kinder friends than I have here in the Courtenays I could not find even there; and this is, moreover, of all the earth, the spot that delights me most.—With Mrs. U.’s best remembrances, I remain, ever thine,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

July 2, 1793.

DEAR SIR,—I have already told you that I heard a word in the year '86, which has been a stone of stumbling to me ever since. It was this:

‘*I will promise you any thing.*’

This word taken in connection with my experience, such as it has been ever since, seems so exactly accomplished, that it leaves me no power at all to believe the promises made to you. You will tell me that it was not from God. By what token am I to prove that? My experience verifies it. In the day I am occupied with my studies, which, whatever they are, are certainly not of a spiritual kind. In the

night I generally sleep well, but wake always under a terrible impression of the wrath of God, and for the most part with words that fill me with alarm, and with the dread of woes to come. What is there in all this that in the least impeaches the truth of the threatening I have mentioned? *I will promise you any thing*:—that is to say, much as I hate you, and miserable as I design to make you, I will yet bid you be of good cheer and expect the best, at the same time that I will show you no favour. This, you will say, is unworthy of God. Alas! He is the fittest to judge what is worthy of Him, and what is otherwise. I can say but this, that His conduct and dealings are totally changed toward me. Once He promised me much, and was so kind to me at the same time, that I most confidently expected the performance. Now He promises me as much, but holds me always at the immense distance, and so far as I know, never deigns to speak to me. What conclusions can I draw from these premises, but that He who once loved now hates me, and is constantly employed in verifying the notice of '86, that is to say, in working directly contrary to his promises?

This is the labyrinth in which I am always bewildered, and from which I have hardly any hope of deliverance.—I remain, yours sincerely,

W.M. COWPER.

July 3.—This morning I waked with these words: ‘Only just to tell you that I am, and that I am with you.’

N.B.—This note was written yesterday evening. I have just received yours of this morning.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, July 7, 1793.

MY DEAREST HAYLEY,—If the excessive heat of this day, which forbids me to do any thing else, will permit me to scribble to you, I shall rejoice. To do this is a pleasure to me at all times, but to do it now a double one; because I am in haste to tell you how much I am delighted with your projected quadruple alliance,¹ and to assure you that if it please God to afford me health, spirits, ability, and leisure, I will not fail to devote them all to the production of my quota of *The Four Ages*.

You are very kind to humour me as you do, and had need be a little touched yourself with all my oddities, that you may know how to administer to mine. All whom I love do so, and I believe it to be impossible to love heartily those who do not. People must not do me good *their* way, but in my *own*, and then they do me good indeed. My pride, my ambition, and my friendship for you, and the interest I take in my own dear self, will all be consulted and gratified by an arm-in-arm appearance with you in public; and I shall work with more zeal and assiduity at Homer, and, when Homer is finished, at Milton, with the prospect of such a coalition before me. But what shall I do with a multitude of small pieces, from which I intended to select the best, and adding them to *The Four Ages*, to have made a volume? Will there be room for them upon your plan? I have retouched them, and will

¹ Hayley had just proposed not only that *The Four Ages* should be the joint work of Cowper and himself, but that Lawrence and Flaxman should illustrate it.

retouch them again. Some of them will suggest pretty devices to a designer, and in short I have a desire not to lose them.

I am at this moment, with all the imprudence natural to poets, expending nobody knows what in embellishing my premises, or rather the premises of my neighbour Courtenay, which is more poetical still. I have built one summer-house already, with the boards of my old study, and am building another spick and span, as they say. I have also a stone-cutter¹ now at work, setting a bust of my dear old Grecian on a pedestal ; and besides all this, I meditate still more that is to be done in the autumn. Your project therefore is most opportune, as any project must needs be that has so direct a tendency to put money into the pocket of one so likely to want it.

Ah brother poet ! send me of your shade,
And bid the Zephyrs hasten to my aid !
Or, like a worm unearth'd at noon, I go
Dispatch'd by sunshine, to the shades below.

My poor Mary is as well as the heat will allow her to be, and whether it could be cold or sultry, is always affectionately mindful of you and yours.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Saturday, 13th July, 1793.

DEAR SIR,—My frame of mind is always the same in the hottest and coldest weather. I am not the worse for the present excessive heat, nor shall be the better for a change.

¹ James Andrews of Olney, Cowper's 'Michael Angelo.'

Mrs. Unwin suffers by it in health, being weaker, and, for want of appetite, hardly eating enough to sustain her. She has beside complained of rheumatic pains in her face ever since the season has been so sultry.

My experience is hardly worth relating. I have had, however, for the most part quiet nights ; nights, I mean, undisturbed by those excessive terrors with which at some times I am so frequently visited, but not free from dreams of a nature that embitter the spirit in the day, nor from notices of that kind neither. This morning I awoke with these words :—

‘ It is the spirit of God dividing you.’

The words alluded I suppose to those in your letter which I received while at breakfast. These twenty years past I have suffered myself to be so divided, according to that.

‘ I will laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear cometh.’

The condition of mind in which I have been left so many years, and in which, for aught that appears, I am likely to continue, seems too much to justify the persuasion and leaves me little or no doubt that in the end I shall find it true. Wm. COWPER.

TO THOMAS PARK

W.U., July 15, 1793.

DEAR SIR,—Within these few days I have received, by favour of Miss Knapp, your acceptable present of Chapman’s translation of the *Iliad*. I know not whether the book be a rarity, but a curiosity it certainly is. I have as yet but seen little of

it, enough, however, to make we wonder that any man with so little taste for Homer, or apprehension of his manner, should think it worth while to undertake the laborious task of translating him;¹ the hope of pecuniary advantage may perhaps account for it. His information, I fear, was not much better than his verse, for I have consulted him in one passage of some difficulty, and find him giving a sense of his own, not at all warranted by the words of Homer. Pope sometimes does this, and sometimes omits the difficult part entirely. I can boast of having done neither, though it has cost me infinite pains to exempt myself from the necessity.

I have seen a translation by Hobbes,² which I prefer for its greater clumsiness. Many years have passed since I saw it, but it made me laugh immoderately. Poetry that is not good can only make amends for that deficiency by being ridiculous; and, because the translation of Hobbes has at least this recommendation, I shall be obliged to you, should it happen to fall in your way, if you would be so kind as to procure it for me. The only edition of it I ever saw (and perhaps there never was another), was a very thick 12mo., both print and paper bad, a sort of book that would be sought in vain, perhaps, anywhere but on a stall.

¹ Pope, Coleridge, and Lamb, however, have warmly praised Chapman's translation, and Keats wrote upon it the fine sonnet commencing—

'Much have I travelled in the realms of gold.'

Thomas Hobbes, the philosopher (1588-1679). His great work, the *Leviathan*, appeared in 1651. At the advanced age of eighty-six he translated part of the *Odyssey*. Having met with success, he proceeded with the remainder, and in 1675 published a translation of both *Odyssey* and *Iliad*. At his death, 4th December 1679, he was in his ninety-second year.

When you saw Lady Hesketh, you saw the relation of mine with whom I have been more intimate, even from childhood, than any other. She has seen much of the world, understands it well, and, having great natural vivacity, is of course one of the most agreeable companions.

I have now arrived almost at a close of my labours on the *Iliad*, and have left nothing behind me, I believe, which I shall wish to alter on any future occasion. In about a fortnight or three weeks I shall begin to do the same for the *Odyssey*, and hope to be able to perform it while the *Iliad* is in printing. Then Milton will demand all my attention, and when I shall find opportunity either to revise your MSS. or to write a poem of my own, which I have in contemplation, I can hardly say. Certainly not till both these tasks are accomplished.—I remain, dear Sir, with many thanks for your kind present, sincerely yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO THE REV. SAMUEL GREATHEED

July 23, 1793.

I WAS not without some expectation of a line from you, my dear Sir, though you did not promise me one at your departure; and am happy not to have been disappointed; still happier to learn that you and Mrs. Greatheed are well, and so delightfully situated. Your kind offer to us of sharing with you the house which you at present inhabit, added to the short but lively description of the scenery that surrounds it, wants nothing to win our acceptance, should it please God to give Mrs. Unwin a little more strength, and should I ever be master of

my time so as to be able to gratify myself with what would please me most. But many have claims upon us, and some who cannot absolutely be said to have any, would yet complain, and think themselves slighted, should we prefer rocks and caves to them. In short, we are called so many ways, that these numerous demands are likely to operate as a *remora*, and to keep us fixed at home. Here we can occasionally have the pleasure of yours and Mrs. Greatheed's company, and to have it here must I believe content us. Hayley in his last letter gives me reason to expect the pleasure of seeing him and his dear boy Tom in the autumn. He will use all his eloquence to draw us to Earham again. My cousin Johnny of Norfolk holds me under a promise to make my first trip thither, and the very same promise I have hastily made to visit Sir John and Lady Throckmorton, at Bucklands.¹ How to reconcile such clashing promises, and to give satisfaction to all, would puzzle me, had I nothing else to do; and therefore, as I say, the result will probably be, that we shall find ourselves obliged to go no where, since we cannot every where.

Wishing you both safe at home again, and to see you, as soon as may be, here,—I remain, affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, July 24, 1793.

I HAVE been vexed with myself, my dearest brother, and with every thing about me, not excepting even Homer himself, that I have been obliged so long to delay an answer to your last kind letter.

¹ In Berkshire.

If I listen any longer to calls another way, I shall hardly be able to tell you how happy we are in the hope of seeing you in the autumn, before the autumn will have arrived. Thrice welcome will you and your dear boy be to us, and the longer you will afford us your company, the more welcome.

You suppose aright that I have not received Mrs. Smith's kind present. Certainly I should not have been silent on the subject of an honour that I esteem so highly, had I known myself the theme of it.¹ Where is the parcel which ought to have come to hand so long ago? I suppose at my bookseller's, who never fails to act as a *remora* in all such cases and in every thing that he has to do with. I doubt not her having said every thing that is proper and every thing that will make me proud and happy, and if she has taught the world to think more highly of me than I have hitherto deserved, as I dare say she has, I must endeavour to justify her by proving myself more worthy of her commendations hereafter. I beg you to make her my kindest and sincerest acknowledgments. I shall write to Johnson in a few days and will then call aloud for my packet. I have set up the head of Homer on a famous fine pedestal, and a very majestic appearance he makes. I am now puzzled about a motto, and wish you to decide for me between two, one of which I have composed myself, a Greek one as follows :

Εἰκόνα τις ταύτην; κλυτὸν ἀνέρος οὐνομ' ὅλωλεν.
Οὐνομα δ' οὐτος ἀνὴρ ἀφθιτον αἰὲν ἔχει.

The other is my own translation of a passage in the

¹ From Grimshawe's note to the next letter, we infer that the reference is to Charlotte Smith's poem, *The Emigrants*.

Odyssey, the original of which I have seen used as a motto to an engraved head of Homer many a time.

The present edition of the lines stands thus :

Him partially the Muse,
And dearly loved, yet gave him good and ill :
She quench'd his sight, but gave him strains divine.

Tell me by the way (if you ever had any speculations on the subject), what is it you suppose Homer to have meant in particular, when he ascribed his blindness to the Muse ? For that he speaks of himself under the name Demodocus, in the eighth book, I believe is by all admitted. How could the old bard study himself blind, when books were either few, or none at all ? And did he write his poems ? If neither were the cause, as seems reasonable to imagine, how could he incur his blindness by such means as could be justly imputable to the Muse ? Would more thinking blind him ? I want to know ;

‘Call up some spirit from the vasty deep’¹

to tell me, for I am of opinion that the matter has never been sifted yet by the commentators, and that though many have read the passage a hundred times they never asked themselves a question about it.

I said to Sam²—‘Sam, build me a shed in the garden, with anything that you can find, and make it rude and rough like one of those at Eartham.’—‘Yes, sir,’ says Sam, and straightway laying his own foolish noddle and the carpenter’s foolish noddle together, has built me a thing fit for Stowe Gardens.³

¹ ‘I can call spirits from the vasty deep.’

SHAKESPEARE, 1 Hen. iv. 3. i.

² Sam Roberts, Cowper’s man-servant.

³ Near Buckingham. Sam used to visit an uncle at Stowe. See Letter of 6th June 1792.

Is not this vexatious, to be made to ruin myself in building whether I will or no ?

But my Mary says I shall break Sam's heart, and his coadjutor's the carpenter's too, and will not consent to it. I am sure if their hearts must not be broken, their heads at least are worthy.

We go on tolerably well, considering the change from more than Jamaica heat to a season that obliged me to breakfast by a fire, and then to the same heat again. Poor Mary sleeps but ill, and has been frequently tortured with a pain in her face, but is otherwise as usual. How have you lived, who cannot bear a sunbeam ?

Adieu, with our united best love,—I remain, my dearest Hayley, ever yours, W.M. COWPER.

TO MRS. CHARLOTTE SMITH

Weston, July 25, 1793.

MY DEAR MADAM,—Many reasons concurred to make me impatient for the arrival of your most acceptable present, and among them was the fear lest you should perhaps suspect me of tardiness in acknowledging so great a favour; a fear that, as often as it prevailed, distressed me exceedingly. At length I have received it, and my little bookseller assures me that he sent it the very day he got it; by some mistake however the waggon brought it instead of the coach, which occasioned a delay that I could ill afford.

It came this morning about an hour ago; consequently I have not had time to peruse the poem, though you may be sure I have found enough for the perusal of the Dedication. I have in fact given

it three readings, and in each have found increasing pleasure.

I am a whimsical creature; when I write for the public I write of course with a desire to please, in other words, to acquire fame, and I labour accordingly; but when I find that I have succeeded, feel myself alarmed, and ready to shrink from the acquisition.

This I have felt more than once, and when I saw my name at the head of your Dedication, I felt it again; but the consummate delicacy of your praise soon convinced me that I might spare my blushes, and that the demand was less upon my modesty than my gratitude. Of that be assured, dear Madam, and of the truest esteem and respect of your most obliged and affectionate, humble servant,

W. C.

P.S.—I should have been much grieved to have let slip this opportunity of thanking you for your charming sonnets, and my two most agreeable old friends, Monimia and Orlando.

TO THE REV. JOHN JOHNSON

Aug. 2, 1793.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,—The Bishop of Norwich¹ has won my heart by his kind and liberal behaviour to you; and, if I knew him, I would tell him so.

I am glad that your auditors find your voice strong, and your utterance distinct; glad, too,

¹ He had ordained Johnson deacon on 7th July 1793, and had promised to collate him to the living of Hempnall near Norwich. See note to Letter of 8th September 1793.

that your doctrine has hitherto made you no enemies. You have a gracious Master, who, it seems, will not suffer you to see war in the beginning. It will be a wonder, however, if you do not, sooner or later, find out that sore place in every heart which can ill endure the touch of apostolic doctrine. Somebody will smart in his conscience, and you will hear of it. I say not this, my dear Johnny, to terrify but to prepare you for that which is likely to happen, and which, troublesome as it may prove, is yet devoutly to be wished; for, in general, there is little good done by preachers till the world begins to abuse them. But understand me aright. I do not mean that you should give them unnecessary provocation, by scolding and railing at them, as some, more zealous than wise, are apt to do. That were to deserve their anger. No; there is no need of it. The self-abasing doctrines of the gospel will, of themselves, create you enemies; but remember this, for your comfort—they will also, in due time, transform them into friends, and make them love you, as if they were your own children. God give you many such; as, if you are faithful to His cause, I trust He will!

Sir John and Lady Throckmorton have lately arrived in England, and are now at the Hall. They have brought me from Rome a set of engravings on *Odyssey* subjects, by Flaxman, whom you have heard Hayley celebrate. They are very fine, very much in the antique style, and a present from the Dowager Lady Spencer.—Ever yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON¹

Aug. 10, 1793.

DEAR SIR,—You will expect a line from me, and it is fit that you should receive one, though to say the truth it is hardly possible for me to find time to send you one. I have no uncommon grievances to complain of. Since I wrote last, my nights have been as quiet as they ever are at the best, and my spirits in the day-time not worse. I will not therefore devote this paper to a recital of melancholy thoughts and experiences. Two nocturnal ones I have had which I will subjoin and then conclude. In the first place, I dreamed about four nights ago that, walking I know not where, I suddenly found my thoughts drawn towards God, when I looked upward and exclaimed—

'I love thee even now more than many who see thee daily.'

Whether the dream was from a good source or not I cannot tell, for it was accompanied with little or no sensation of a spiritual kind.

This morning I had partly in Latin and partly in Greek,—

'Qui adversus σέθεν stant, nihil erunt.'

I conclude myself in haste, with many thanks for your prayers and kind remembrances, in which we both unite.—Yours sincerely,

Wm. COWPER.²

¹ The original is in the Royal Museum, Salford.

² In *Teedon's Diary* under Aug. 10, 1793, we find, 'Received a letter from the Esquire of happier import than any I ever received on the whole. The Lord grant it may be his harbinger of deliverance.'

TO LADY HESKETH

Weston, Aug. 11, 1793.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,—I am glad that my poor and hasty attempts to express some little civility to Miss Fanshawe,¹ and the amiable Count,² have your and her approbation. The lines addressed to her were not what I would have made them; but lack of time, a lack which always presses me, would not suffer me to improve them. Many thanks for her letter, which, were my merits less the subject of it, I should without scruple say is an excellent one. She writes with the force and accuracy of a person skilled in more languages than are spoken in the present day, as I doubt not that she is. I perfectly approve the theme she recommends to me, but am at present so totally absorbed in Homer, that all I do beside is ill done, being hurried over; and I would not execute ill a subject of her recommending.

I shall watch the walnuts with more attention than those who eat them, which I do in some hope, though you do not expressly say so, that when their threshing time arrives, we shall see you here. I am now going to paper my new study, and in a short time it will be fit to inhabit.

Lady Spencer has sent me a present from Rome, by the hands of Sir John Throckmorton, engravings

¹ *Answer to Stanzas addressed to Lady Hesketh by Miss Catharine Fanshawe.* Lady Hesketh had lent Miss Fanshawe a ms. poem of Cowper's on condition that she should neither show nor copy it. Miss Fanshawe did not show or copy the poem, but committed it to memory and wrote to Lady Hesketh in verse to tell her so. See Globe Ed. pp. 395 and 529.

² Count Gravina, who had translated into Italian verse Cowper's lines on the Rose—‘The Rose had been washed,’ etc.

of *Odyssey* subjects, after figures : by Flaxman, a statuary at present resident there, of high repute, and much a friend of Hayley's.

Thou livest, my dear, I acknowledge, in a very fine country, but they have spoiled it by building London in it.—Adieu.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, Aug. 15, 1793.

INSTEAD of a pound or two, spending a mint,
Must serve me at least, I believe, with a hint,
That building, and building, a man may be driven
At last out of doors, and have no house to live in.

Besides, my dearest brother, they have not only built for me what I did not want, but have ruined a notable tetrastich by doing so.¹ I had written one which I designed for a hermitage, and it will by no means suit the fine and pompous affair which they have made instead of one. So that as a poet I am every way afflicted ; made poorer than I need have been, and robbed of my verses ; what case can be more deplorable ?

You must not suppose me ignorant of what Flaxman has done, or that I have not seen it, or that I am not actually in possession of it, at least, of the engravings which you mention. In fact, I have had them more than a fortnight. Lady Dowager Spencer, to whom I inscribed my *Odyssey*, and who was at Rome when Sir John Throckmorton was there, charged him with them as a present to me, and arriving here lately he

¹ ‘This cabin, Mary, in my sight appears,
Built as it has been in our waning years,
A rest afforded to our weary feet,
Preliminary to—the last retreat.’

executed his commission. Romney, I doubt not, is right in his judgment of them; he is an artist himself, and cannot easily be mistaken; and I take his opinion as an oracle, the rather because it coincides exactly with my own. The figures are highly classical, antique, and elegant; especially that of Penelope, who whether she wakes or sleeps must necessarily charm all beholders.

Your scheme of embellishing my *Odyssey* with these plates is a kind one, and the fruit of your benevolence to me; but Johnson, I fear, will hardly stake so much money as the cost would amount to on a work, the fate of which is at present uncertain. Nor could we adorn the *Odyssey* in this splendid manner, unless we had similar ornaments to bestow on the *Iliad*. Such I presume are not ready, and much time must elapse, even if Flaxman should accede to the plan, before he should possibly prepare them. Happy indeed should I be to see a work of mine so nobly accompanied; but should that good fortune ever attend me, it cannot take place till the third or fourth edition shall afford the occasion. This I regret, and I regret too that you will have seen them before I can have an opportunity to show them to you. Here is sixpence for you if you will abstain from the sight of them while you are in London.

I am reading to Mrs. Unwin *The Old Manor House*,¹ having never had an opportunity to do it before. We were pleased with the first volume, still more with the second, and doubt not that our pleasure will increase with the last. Mrs. Smith's Augusta, I see, is lately married to a French gentle-

¹ By Charlotte Smith.

man, consequently to an emigrant, and consequently to a man not quite so rich as Croesus. This, therefore, I conclude, was among the troubles which you lately told me she began to feel on account of her marriageable daughters. I wish her delivered out of all her troubles, but she has probably many of the same sort to encounter, for boys are not always wiser than girls in choosing a conjugal companion.

The sculptor?—Nameless, though once dear to fame;
But this man bears an everlasting name.¹

So I purpose it shall stand; and on the pedestal when you come, in that form you will find it. The added line from the *Odyssey* is charming, but the assumption of sonship to Homer seems too daring; suppose it stood thus,

'Ως δὲ Παῖς φ' πατρὶ, καὶ οὐποτε λήσομαι αὐτοῦ.

I am not sure that this would be clear of the same objection, and it departs from the text still more.

I have heard nothing more of Thurlow, nor ever shall. Woe be to you if the rain that has fallen to-day has found your house without a covering.² On such terms nothing but a shower of gold would be welcome.

With my poor Mary's best love and our united wishes to see you here, I remain, my dearest brother,
ever yours,

W. C.

¹ Translation by Hayley, slightly altered by Cowper, of Cowper's Greek lines under the bust of Homer. See Letters of 24th July 1793, and 27th July 1793.

² Referring to alterations at Eartham.

TO MRS. COURTENAY

Weston, Aug. 20, 1793.

My dearest Catharina is too reasonable, I know, to expect news from me, who live on the outside of the world, and know nothing that passes within it. The best news is, that though you are gone, you are not gone for ever, as once I supposed you were, and said that we should probably meet no more. Some news, however, we have; but then I conclude that you have already received it from the Doctor,¹ and that thought almost deprives me of all courage to relate it. On the evening of the feast, Bob Archer's house affording I suppose the best room for the purpose, all the lads and lasses, who felt themselves disposed to dance, assembled there. Long time they danced, at least long time they did something a little like it; when at last, the company having retired, the fiddler asked Bob for a lodging. Bob replied—‘that his beds were all full of his own family, but if he chose it he would show him a haycock, where he might sleep as sound as in any bed whatever.’—So forth they went together, and when they reached the place, the fiddler knocked down Bob, and demanded his money. But happily for Bob, though he might be knocked down, and actually was so, yet he could not possibly be robbed, having nothing. The fiddler therefore, having amused himself with kicking him and beating him as he lay, as long as he saw good, left him, and has never been heard of since, nor inquired after indeed, being

¹ Dr. Gregson, the priest at Weston.

no doubt the last man in the world whom Bob wishes to see again.

By a letter from Hayley to-day I learn that Flaxman, to whom we are indebted for those *Odyssey* figures which Lady Frog brought over, has almost finished a set for the *Iliad* also. I should be glad to embellish my Homer with them, but neither my bookseller nor I shall probably choose to risk so expensive an ornament on a work, whose reception with the public is at present doubtful.

Adieu, my dearest Catharina. Give my best love to your husband. Come home as soon as you can, and accept our united very best wishes.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Weston, Aug 22, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I rejoice that you have had so pleasant an excursion, and have beheld so many beautiful scenes. Except the delightful Upway I have seen them all. I have lived much at Southampton, have slept and caught a sore throat at Lyndhurst, and have swum in the bay of Weymouth. It will give us great pleasure to see you here, should your business give you an opportunity to finish your excursions of this season with one to Weston.

As for my going on, it is much as usual. I rise at six; an industrious and wholesome practice, from which I have never swerved since March. I breakfast generally about eleven, having given the intermediate time to my old delightful bard.

Villoison no longer keeps me company. I therefore now jog along with Clarke¹ and Barnes² at my elbow, and from the excellent annotations of the former select such as I think likely to be useful, or that recommend themselves by the amusement they may afford, of which sorts there are not a few. Barnes also affords me some of both kinds, but not so many, his notes being chiefly paraphrastical or grammatical. My only fear is lest between them both I should make my work too voluminous.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, 27 Aug. 1793.

WHAT with my engagements to Homer, to my two, and to the business of weighing out emetic tartar for the poor, who always at this time of year have stomachs that want scouring, it is almost impossible that I should find any time for writing; but lest our letters should cross each other again, which after all is not unlikely, I seize a short interval to scribble something like a letter to you, or at least a piece of one.

I thank you, my dear brother, for consulting the Gibbonian oracle³ on the question concerning Homer's Muse, and his blindness. I proposed it likewise to my little neighbour Buchanan, who gave me precisely the same answer. I felt an insatiable thirst to learn something new concerning him, and

¹ The edition of Homer with Latin version and notes by Dr. Samuel Clarke. It appeared in 1729. Cowper's copy was of the edition of 1754.

² The edition of Homer by Joshua Barnes. 2 vols. 4to. 1711.

³ Edward Gibbon the historian. Later, Hayley tried, but without success, to make Cowper and Gibbon personally acquainted with each other.

despairing of information from others, was willing to hope that I had stumbled on matter unnoticed by the commentators, and might perhaps acquire a little intelligence from himself. But the great and the little oracle together have extinguished that hope, and I despair now of making any curious discoveries about him.

Since Flaxman (which I did not know till your letter told me so) has been at work for the *Iliad*, as well as the *Odyssey*, it seems a great pity that the engravings should not be bound up with some Homer or other; and, as I said before, I should have been too proud to have bound them up in mine. But there is an objection, at least such it seems to me, that threatens to disqualify them for such a use, namely, the shape and size of them, which are such that no book of the usual form could possibly receive them, save in a folded state, which I apprehend would be to murder them.

I rejoice in the Æschylus figures, though he is an author of whom I know nothing except by hearsay, and shall be very happy should it ever be my fortune to see them.

The monument of Lord Mansfield,¹ for which you say he is engaged, will (I dare say) prove a noble effort of genius. Statuaries, as I have heard an eminent one say, do not much trouble themselves about a likeness: else I would give much to be able to communicate to Flaxman the perfect idea that I have of the subject, such as he was forty years ago. He was at that time wonderfully handsome, and would expound the most mysterious intricacies of the law, or recapitulae both matter and evidence

¹ In Westminster Abbey.

of a cause, as long as from hence to Earham, with an intelligent smile on his features, that bespoke plainly the perfect ease with which he did it. The most abstruse studies (I believe) never cost him any labour.

Forget not, my dear brother, to return my compliments to your fair correspondent at Rome, and tell her how happy I am in the possession of these performances of her incomparable hero, and how much I admire them.

You say nothing lately of your intended journey our way : yet the year is waning, and the shorter days give you a hint to lose no time unnecessarily. Lately we had the whole family at the Hall, and now we have nobody. The Throckmortons are gone into Berkshire, and the Courtenays into Yorkshire. They are so pleasant a family, that I heartily wish you to see them ; and at the same time wish to see you before they return, which will not be sooner than October. How shall I reconcile these wishes seemingly opposite ? Why, by wishing that you may come soon and stay long. I know no other way of doing it.

My poor Mary is much as usual.

I have been accompanying her in her morning walk and have since electrified her. It is now time that I should take my own adieu ; therefore, my dear Hayley, and with her affectionate remembrances united with mine, believe me ever yours,

Wm. COWPER.

I have set up Homer's head, and inscribed the pedestal ; my own Greek at the top, with your translation under it, and

'Ως δὲ πᾶσι φί πατρὶ, etc.

It makes altogether a very smart and learned appearance.

You may see by my blunders how I hurry through. So I am forced to write to everybody, and often cannot understand myself.

TO LADY HESKETH

Aug. 29, 1793.

YOUR question, at what time your coming to us will be most agreeable, is a knotty one, and such as, had I the wisdom of Solomon, I should be puzzled to answer. I will therefore leave it still a question, and refer the time of your journey Westonward entirely to your own election: adding this one limitation, however, that I do not wish to see you exactly at present, on account of the unfinished state of my study, the wainscot of which still smells of paint, and which is not yet papered. But to return: as I have insinuated, thy pleasant company is the thing which I always wish, and as much at one time as at another. I believe if I examine myself minutely, since I despair of ever having it in the height of summer, which for your sake I should desire most, the depth of the winter is the season which would be most eligible to me. For then it is, that in general I have most need of a cordial, and particularly in the month of January. I am sorry, however, that I have departed so far from my first purpose, and am answering a question which I declared myself unable to answer. Choose thy own time, secure of this, that whatever time that be, it will always be to us a welcome one.

I thank you for your pleasant extract of Miss Fanshawe's letter.

'Her pen drops eloquence as sweet
As any Muse's tongue can speak ;
Nor need a scribe, like her, regret
Her want of Latin or of Greek.'

And now, my dear, adieu ! I have done more than I expected, and begin to feel myself exhausted with so much scribbling at the end of four hours' close application to study. W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

30 Aug. 1793.

DEAR SIR,—a short line, just to thank you for your sympathy and your prayers, is all that I have time to write, for I write to you at an early hour, at the season which I devote to my studies, and which I cannot afford to shorten. I wish, for your sake, that I had better news to send you, but unless I were actually in a state of eternal torment, I could hardly have been worse. No words can describe the horrors of my sleep, or of my waking, nor the distress and depression of soul under which I always labour. I know and am sure that there is but half a step between me and perdition, that I stand on the verge of the pit, and that all hell is at my back ready to push me into it. God I know is furiously angry with me, and if His anger is not already implacable, it is on the point of being so. Of this I have been assured this morning, and, I believe, by Himself, I was assured also in the course

of the night, that my next plunge will be into madness.¹

My miseries are a subject with which, even if I had time to descant upon them, I should not choose to trust myself any further; they are apt to extort from me expressions for which I pay dear afterward.

Mrs. U. has not slept above an hour and half, and about her too, I am kept in continual alarm.
—I remain, yours sincerely,

W.M. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN JOHNSON

Weston, Sept. 6, 1793.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,—To do a kind thing, and in a kind manner, is a double kindness, and no man is more addicted to both than you, or more skilful in contriving them. Your plan to surprise me agreeably succeeded to admiration. It was only the day before yesterday that, while we walked after dinner in the orchard, Mrs. Unwin between Sam and me, hearing the hall-clock, I observed a great difference between that and ours, and began immediately to lament, as I had often done, that there was not a sun-dial in all Weston to ascertain the true time for us. My complaint was long, and lasted till, having turned into the grass walk, we reached the new building at the end of it; where we sat awhile and reposed ourselves. In a few minutes we returned by the way we came, when, what think you, was my astonishment to see what I had not seen before, though I had passed close by it, a smart sun-dial mounted on a smart stone

¹ ‘1793, Aug. 29.—I wrote to the Esq., but before the letter was sent I received from him a most sorrowful note that he believed himself on the verge of madness.’—*Teedon’s Diary.*

pedestal! I assure you it seemed the effect of conjuration. I stopped short, and exclaimed,—‘Why, here is a sun-dial,¹ and upon our ground! How is this? Tell me, Sam, how came it here? Do you know anything about it?’ At first I really thought (that is to say, as soon as I could think at all) that this factotum of mine, Sam Roberts, having often heard me deplore the want of one, had given orders for the supply of that want himself, without my knowledge, and was half pleased and half offended. But he soon exculpated himself by imputing the fact to you. It was brought up to Weston (it seems) about noon: but Andrews² stopped the cart at the blacksmith’s, whence he sent to inquire if I was gone for my walk. As it happened, I walked not till two o’clock. So there it stood waiting till I should go forth, and was introduced before my return. Fortunately too I went out at the church end of the village, and consequently saw nothing of it. How I could possibly pass it without seeing it, when it stood in the walk, I know not, but it is certain that I did. And where I shall fix it now, I know as little. It cannot stand between the two gates, the place of your choice, as I understand from Samuel, because the hay-cart must pass that way in the season. But we are now busy in winding the walk all round the orchard, and in doing so shall doubtless stumble at last upon some open spot that will suit it.

There it shall stand, while I live, a constant monument of your kindness.

¹ This sun-dial was subsequently removed to the garden at the back of the granary, but I do not know where it is now. The only inscription on it was: ‘Walter Gough, No. 21 Middle Row, Holborn, London.’

² James Andrews of Olney, who carved the pedestal.

I have this moment finished the twelfth book of the *Odyssey*; and I read the *Iliad* to Mrs. Unwin every evening.

The effect of this reading is, that I still spy blemishes, something at least that I can mend, so that, after all, the transcript of alterations, which you and George have made, will not be a perfect one. It would be foolish to forego an opportunity of improvement for such a reason; neither will I. It is ten o'clock, and I must breakfast. Adieu, therefore, my dear Johnny! Remember your appointment to see us in October.—Ever yours,

W.C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, Sept. 8, 1793.

Non sum quod simulo, my dearest Brother? I seem cheerful upon paper sometimes, when I am absolutely the most dejected of all creatures. Desirous, however, to gain something myself by my own letters, unprofitable as they may and must be to my friends, I keep melancholy out of them as I can, that I may, if possible, by assuming a less gloomy air, deceive myself, and by feigning with a continuance, improve the fiction into a reality.

I am glad that Romney is with you, both because I know that his residence at Eartham is salutary to him, and a comfort to you. His studies are of a kind that make such a change particularly necessary to him. I beg that you will remember me kindly to him, and tell him that I seldom now sit down to my dressing-table without thinking of him. My razor does its work so much better than ever

it did before, since I became possessed of the strop with which he furnished me.

So you have seen Flaxman's figures, which I intended you should not have seen till I had spread them before you. How did you dare to look at them? You should have covered your eyes with both hands, and have bid Romney put them in his box again. To have done this would have been a little in the style of what my grandmother,¹ who was much of a humorist, made her steward do. She saw him from her window bringing her a leathern bag full of money, and swinging it to and fro in his hand as he approached the house. He was no sooner introduced to her, than without allowing him time to open his business she said—‘I saw you swinging my money as you came, and as I choose not to have my throat cut I desire you will immediately go home again swinging it all the way in exactly the same manner.’

You may tell me in the words of either Matt or Dick in Prior's *Alma*,—

‘Your tale, howe'er applied was short,
So far at least I thank you for 't.'

I am charmed with Flaxman's Penelope, and though you do not deserve that I should, will send you a few lines, such as they are, with which she inspired me the other day while I was taking my noon-day walk.

The suitors sinned but with a fair excuse
Whom all this elegance might well seduce,
Nor can our censure on the husband fall
Who, for a wife so lovely, slew them all.
Strange art! which both obliterates the guilt
And makes the offender's blood seem justly spilt.

¹ Probably the wife of Spencer (Judge) Cowper.

I know not that you will meet anybody here, when we see you in October, unless perhaps my Johnny should happen to be with us.

He comes on the eleventh of that month, but will be obliged to make a short stay, being no longer a free man but pastor of a large parish.¹ A few days since, I walked into the garden with Mary in the afternoon, and to my inexpressible surprise saw there a smart sun-dial mounted smartly on a stone pedestal. Having ordered no such thing, I inquired, of course, how it came there, and was answered that Johnny ordered it when he was here and had strictly enjoined the artificer to introduce it without my knowledge, which was done accordingly.

If Tom is charmed with the thoughts of coming to Weston, we are equally so with the thoughts of seeing him here. At his years I should hardly hope to make his visit agreeable to him, did not I know that he is of a temper and disposition that must make him happy everywhere. Give our love to him, and let Socket know that we do not forget him. Adieu, with Mary's kindest remembrances to yourself and *il caro pittore*.—I remain, truly yours,

W.M. COWPER.

If Romney can come with you, we have both room to receive him, and hearts to make him most welcome.

¹ John Johnson did not become pastor of this parish till three months later. He was ordained priest, 22nd December 1793. The day following 'he was collated by the Bishop of Norwich to the living of Hempnall in Norfolk, till his cousin, Castres Mott Donne, was old enough to take it.'—*Letters of Lady Hesketh*, edited by C. B. Johnson, 1901. Teedon had written in his *Diary*, 29th June 1792, 'This day Hanh. called. . . . She told me of Mr. Johnson's presentation to a living of 400 a year to hold it for a minor 14 years.'

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Sept. 13, 1793.

DEAR SIR,—The time is come about when I feel myself called upon to say something in acknowledgement of the many prayers you make for us and the many notices you send me. When I have thanked you for them, I have said all on the subject that is worth saying. For neither the prayers are in any degree answered, nor the notices fulfilled. Of course I continue as I was; distressed and full of despair. The day hardly ever comes in which I do not utter a wish that I had never been born. And the night is become so habitually a season of dread to me, that I never lie down on my bed with comfort, and am in this respect a greater sufferer than Job, who, concerning his hours of rest, could hope at least, though he was disappointed. I cannot ever hope on that subject, after twenty years' experience that in my case that to go to sleep is to throw myself into the mouth of my enemy.

Some time since I took laudanum, and found a little relief from that. Now I take James's powder, and from that find a little relief also. But what is the relief from such remedies worth? I cannot always take them. After a time, they lose their effect, and the effect is trivial while it lasts.

My pen runs, and I say little to the purpose. Complaints are idle, and only imbitter my spirit the more. I will cease, therefore, and add no more than that I remain, sincerely yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO MRS. COURTENAY

Sept. 15, 1793.

A THOUSAND thanks, my dearest Catharina, for your pleasant letter; one of the pleasantest that I have received since your departure. You are very good to apologise for your delay, but I had not flattered myself with the hopes of a speedier answer. Knowing full well your talents for entertaining your friends who are present, I was sure you would with difficulty find half an hour that you could devote to an absent one.

I am glad that you think of your return. Poor Weston is a desolation without you. In the meantime I amuse myself as well as I can, thrumming old Homer's lyre, and turning the premises upside down. Upside down indeed, for so it is literally that I have been dealing with the orchard, almost ever since you went, digging and delving it around to make a new walk, which now begins to assume the shape of one, and to look as if some time or other it may serve in that capacity. Taking my usual exercise there the other day with Mrs. Unwin, a wide disagreement between your clock and ours occasioned me to complain much, as I have often done, of the want of a dial. Guess my surprise, when at the close of my complaint I saw one—saw one close at my side; a smart one, glittering in the sun, and mounted on a pedestal of stone. I was astonished. ‘This,’ I exclaimed, ‘is absolute conjuration!—It was a most mysterious affair, but the mystery was at last explained.

This scribble I presume will find you just arrived at Bucklands. I would with all my heart that since

dials can be thus suddenly conjured from one place to another, I could be so too, and could start up before your eyes in the middle of some walk or lawn, where you and Lady Frog are wandering.

While Pitcairne whistles for his family estate in Fifeshire, he will do well if he will sound a few notes for me. I am originally of the same shire, and a family of that name is still there, to whom perhaps he may whistle on my behalf, not altogether in vain. So shall his fife excel all my poetical efforts, which have not yet, and I dare say never will, effectually charm one acre of ground into my possession.

Remember me to Sir John, Lady Frog, and your husband;—tell them I love them all. She told me once she was jealous, now indeed she seems to have some reason, since to her I have not written, and have written twice to you. But bid her be of good courage, in due time I will give her proof of my constancy.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Sept. 27, 1793.

DEAR SIR,—I have nothing to communicate worth your knowledge, no change having taken place either in favour of me or Mrs. Unwin. My spirits continue much as they were, except that by James's powder and the bark my fever being somewhat assuaged, my nights are less disturbed and my days less gloomy. But the rush cannot grow without water nor the flag without mire, nor am I in the least degree benefited by what you send with a hope to comfort me, or by what I hear myself. These words I heard this morning:

'They are mine, and none shall ever pluck them out of my hand.'

But words articulated merely, and unaccompanied with any power, do me no good, whoever be the speaker; and these in particular may be true, and undoubtedly are so respecting others, but being imparted to me in the third person, seem not to be intended for self-application in my instance.—I remain, sincerely yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Sept. 29, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have now a small opportunity to write something in answer to both your letters.

In the first place I shall (we shall) be heartily glad to see both you and your companion Mr. Lawrence;¹ to whose mimetic powers, if I afford myself a subject, it is a consent resembling that of Jupiter on a different occasion, and which I give,

‘ἐκῶν δέκοντί γε θυμῷ,’

words rendered by a certain translator thus :

‘. not pleased myself,
Yet not unsatisfied if thou be pleased.’

I confess, however, at the same time that I should very little deserve your friendship, to which I ascribe your wish to have a copy of my phiz, if I felt the least difficulty in gratifying you.

As to my new edition of Homer, it is in such forwardness that I hope soon to arrive at an end of

¹ Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830). President of the Royal Academy. Born at Bristol. Elected Associate of the Royal Academy in 1791, full member in 1798. Knighted in 1815. Painted Cowper's portrait in 1795, and John Kemble as 'Hamlet' in 1801. Was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral.

my preparations for it. I have just now finished the 20th *Odyssey*, both notes and alterations. In about a fortnight perhaps I can finish the other four. But when that is done, I shall still wish to scamper through the *Iliad* once more with Clarke's notes before me. Hitherto I have illustrated that poem with translated scholia only; with those I mean edited by Villoison; but Clarke's observations are often so much more to the purpose than those of the ancient translators, that I think it would be pity not to add the best of them. It is much I can tell you that I have done, considering that I work only before breakfast. The huge Greek folio given me by Sir John Throckn. I have read quite through, and translated from it all that seemed worthy of notice; and have likewise read all the notes of Barnes and Clarke on the *Odyssey*, translating, as I went, from them in the same manner; the four last books excepted as above said.

I flatter myself that now my translation will be found a useful work, and I am sure that it is delivered from all that the critics would have objected to, besides having received a thousand other improvements. Also I flatter myself that the whole will be fit for the press before Christmas.

I am glad it so falls out that Johnny will meet you here, for him I expect on the 11th, but we are not equally fortunate in another particular, for I fear you will miss Hayley, or only get a glimpse of him, for the 20th is the day appointed for his arrival.

I have only to trouble you for three or four tooth brushes of the hook form kind, such as serve best for inside use. The Quaker had my order for sugar yesterday; you will therefore see him soon.

We unite in affectionate comps. to Mrs. Rose and all your family, and with best wishes for your good journey, I remain, sincerely yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN JOHNSON

Weston, Sept. 29, 1793.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,—You have done well to leave off visiting, and being visited. Visits are insatiable devourers of time, and fit only for those who, if they did not that, would do nothing. The worst consequence of such departures from common practice is to be termed a singular sort of a fellow, or an odd fish ; a sort of reproach that a man might be wise enough to contemn, who had not half your understanding.

I look forward with pleasure to October the eleventh, the day which I expect will be *Albo notandus lapillo*, on account of your arrival here.

Here you will meet Mr. Rose, who comes on the eighth, and brings with him Mr. Lawrence, the painter, you may guess for what purpose. Lawrence returns when he has made his copy of me, but Mr. Rose will remain perhaps as long as you will. Hayley on the contrary will come, I suppose, just in time not to see you. Him we expect on the twentieth. I trust, however, that thou wilt so order thy pastoral matters as to make thy stay here as long as possible.

Lady Hesketh, in her last letter, inquires very kindly after you, asks me for your address, and purposes soon to write to you. We hope to see her in November—so that after a summer without

company, we are likely to have an autumn and a winter sociable enough.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, Oct. 5, 1793.

MY good intentions towards you, my dearest brother, are continually frustrated; and, which is most provoking, not by such engagements and avocations as have a right to my attention, such as those to my Mary, and to the old bard of Greece, but by mere impertinences, such as calls of civility from persons not very interesting to me, and letters from a distance still less interesting, because the writers of them are strangers. A man sent me a long copy of verses, which I could do no less than acknowledge. They were silly enough, and cost me eighteen pence, which was seventeen pence half-penny farthing more than they were worth. Another sent me at the same time a plan, requesting my opinion of it, and that I would lend him my name as editor; a request with which I shall not comply, but I am obliged to tell him so, and one letter is all that I have time to despatch in a day, sometimes half a one, and sometimes I am not able to write at all. Thus it is that my time perishes, and I can neither give so much of it as I would to you or to any other valuable purpose.

On Tuesday we expect company. Mr. Rose and Lawrence the painter. Yet once more is my patience to be exercised, and once more I am made to wish that my face had been moveable, to put on and take off at pleasure, so as to be portable in a bandbox, and sent to the artist. These however will be gone,

as I believe I told you, before you arrive, at which time I know not that anybody will be here except my Johnny, whose presence will not at all interfere with our readings. You will not, I believe, find me a very slashing critic ; I hardly indeed expect to find any thing in your *Life of Milton* that I shall sentence to amputation. How should it be too long ? A well-written work, sensible and spirited, such as yours was when I saw it, is never so. But however, we shall see. I promise to spare nothing that I think may be lopped off with advantage.

I began this letter yesterday, but could not finish it till now. I have risen this morning like an infernal frog out of Acheron, covered with the ooze and mud of melancholy. For this reason I am not sorry to find myself at the bottom of my paper, for had I more room, perhaps I might fill it all with croaking, and make an heart ache at Earham, which I wish to be always cheerful. Adieu. My poor sympathising Mary is of course sad, but always mindful of you.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Saturday, 12th Oct., 1793.

DEAR SIR,—Having company¹ at the house, I am amused ; and having been obliged to take laudanum again to quiet my nerves and spirits, somewhat decomposed by their arrival, I have slept more composedly of late, and accordingly have for some days

¹ Rose and Lawrence who came on the 8th, Johnson who came on the 11th. With Lawrence's portrait of Cowper Lady Hesketh was particularly pleased, but she said that it was too animated. Cowper is represented in one of those white caps which he used to wear of a morning.

past suffered less from melancholy than I usually do.

I have thus given you a short account of my present frame of mind, and the reasons and causes that have occasioned it. The time I have for writing is short, and will not allow me to add much. I have however to observe, what I have observed so often, that for these intervals, in which my experience is less painful, I am always indebted to incident, and not to any manifestation of mercy. They are therefore the less valuable, but such as they are I am glad of them, and desire to make the most of them.

I have had the letters you sent this week, and am obliged to you for them, as well as for your constant intercessions. Surely they will not always be ineffectual.—I remain, dear sir, yrs. sincerely,

Wm. COWPER.

Mrs. U. is as well as usual.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Oct 18, 1793.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—I have not at present much that is necessary to say here, because I shall have the happiness of seeing you so soon; my time, according to custom, is a mere scrap, for which reason such must be my letter also.

You will find here more than I have hitherto given you reason to expect, but none who will not be happy to see you. These however stay with us but a short time, and will leave us in full possession of Weston on Wednesday next.

I look forward with joy to your coming, heartily wishing you a pleasant journey, in which my poor

Mary joins me. Give our best love to Tom; without whom, after having been taught to look for him, we should feel our pleasure in the interview much diminished.

Laeti expectamus te puerumque tuum.

W. C.

In a day or two Hayley was paying his second visit to Weston. He stayed about a month.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

Weston, Oct. 22, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—You are very kind to apologise for a short letter, instead of reproaching me with having been so long entirely silent. I persuaded myself, however, that while you were on your journey, you would miss me less as a correspondent than you do when you are at home, and therefore allowed myself to pursue my literary labours only, but still purposing to write as soon as I should have reason to judge you returned to London. Hindrances, however, to the execution even of that purpose have interposed; and at this moment I write in the utmost haste, as indeed I always do, partly because I never begin a letter till I am already fatigued with study, and partly through fear of interruption before I can possibly finish it.

I rejoice that you have travelled so much to your satisfaction. As to me, my travelling days, I believe, are over. Our journey of last year was less beneficial, both to Mrs. Unwin's health and my spirits, than I hoped it might be; and we are hardly rich enough to migrate in quest of pleasure merely.

I thank you much for your last publication, which I am reading, as fast as I can snatch opportunity, to Mrs. Unwin. We have found it, as far as we have gone, both interesting and amusing ; and I never cease to wonder at the fertility of your invention, that, shut up as you were in your vessel, and dis-united from the rest of mankind, could yet furnish you with such variety, and with the means likewise, of saying the same thing in so many different ways.

Sincerely yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Oct. 25, 1793.

DEAR SIR,—I thank you sincerely for your earnest prayers, and for your letters, which I have received duly. Could I feed on the bread which seems to be intended for me, it is so plentifully imparted to you, that I should feel no want : but I am in the state of Tantalus, surrounded with plenty, and yet famished. If God designed that I should eat, would he not enable me to do so ? This is mysterious, and I cannot solve it.

I dream nothing, hear nothing but from enemies ; never wake without hearing ; but the matter is generally so trivial, if it be not terrible, that it seems spoken only in derision.

Poor Mrs. Unwin is again a great sufferer by a sore tongue. She is otherwise much as usual. As for me, I have tolerable spirits, owing, as when I wrote last, to company and laudanum.

In about a month, perhaps in less, I shall begin Milton, and beg your prayers in the mean time on that subject, which always appears formidable to

1793] TO MRS. CHARLOTTE SMITH 461

me. I am in a poor condition both of heart and mind to write evangelical Dissertations. A deaf man treating of music.—I remain, with Mrs. U.'s remembrances, sincerely yours, Wm. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

DEAR SIR,—Every note of mine is nearly a repetition of the former, and I am glad that it is, for while Mrs. Unwin's amendment in health proceeds, it will be so. She continues to gather strength by little and little, and every day adds somewhat to her recovery.

As to my own restoration, it seems still distant as ever, and nothing so far as I can perceive is done toward it. But this is a tale that you often hear likewise, and less worth repeating.

If Mr. Killingworth has finished one pair of Letter boards,¹ I shall be glad to have it by the first opportunity, and am,—Yrs, Wm. Cowper.

TO MRS. CHARLOTTE SMITH

Weston-Undd., Oct. 26, 1793.

DEAR MADAM,—Your two² counsellors are of one mind. We both are of opinion that you will do well to make your second volume a suitable companion to the first, by embellishing it in the same manner; and have no doubt, considering the well-deserved popularity of your verse, that the expense will be amply refunded by the public.

I would give you, Madam, not my counsel only, but consolation also, were I not disqualified for that

¹ They were blue, and just big enough to receive quarto letter paper, upon which Cowper wrote most of his poems.

² Hayley, let it be remembered, was visiting at Weston.

delightful service by a great dearth of it in my own experience. I, too, often seek but cannot find it. Of this, however, I can assure you, if that may at all comfort you, that both my friend Hayley and myself most truly sympathise with you under all your sufferings ; neither have you, I am persuaded, in any degree lost the interest you always had in him, or your claim to any service of whatever kind that it may be in his power to render you. Had you no other title to his esteem, his respect for your talents and his feelings for your misfortunes must insure to you the friendship of such a man for ever. I know, however, that there are seasons when, look which way we will, we see the same dismal gloom enveloping all objects. This is itself an affliction, and the worse because it makes us think ourselves more unhappy than we are ; and at such a season it is, I doubt not, that you suspect a diminution of our friend's zeal to serve you.

I was much struck by an expression in your letter to Hayley, where you say that 'you will endeavour to take an interest in green leaves again.' This seems the sound of my own voice reflected to me from a distance, I have so often had the same thought and desire. A day scarcely passes at this season of the year when I do not contemplate the trees so soon to be stript, and say, perhaps I shall never see you clothed again ; every year as it passes makes this expectation more reasonable, and the year, with me, cannot be very distant when the event will verify it. Well—may God grant us a good hope of arriving in due time where the leaves never fall, and all will be right.

Mrs. Unwin, I think, is a little better than when

you saw her, but still feeble ; so feeble as to keep me in a state of continual apprehension. I live under the point of a sword suspended by a hair. She begs you to accept her compliments.

Adieu, my dear madam ; believe me, your sincere and affectionate humble servant,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOHN UNWIN (SON OF REV. WILLIAM UNWIN)

Weston, Oct. 29, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,—It is most painful and mortifying not only to Mrs. Unwin but to myself likewise that the great weakness of her present condition both in health and spirits will not allow her the happiness of seeing you ; dear to her as is the memory of your father, it is not possible that she should see and converse with a son of his, whom she has not seen so many years, without more emotion than she can undergo without injury. It is not more than a month since I wrote by her desire to Mrs. Powley¹ to prevent her coming as she proposed. I am in no pain about the interpretation you will put on this negative, assured that your candour and kindness will direct you to the best and only just one. The very proposal, to say the truth, disordered her yesterday not a little, and to a degree that she has not yet recovered.

She begs you to accept her affectionate best wishes, to which I add my own with great sincerity, and remain, dear Sir, very warmly and truly yours,

WM. COWPER.

¹ Mrs. Unwin's daughter Susanna, wife of the Rev. Matthew Powley, vicar of Dewsbury. Mr. Powley died in 1806, Mrs. Powley in 1835.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

Nov. 2, 1793.¹

DEAR SIR,—It would be a great comfort to me, and not for my own sake only but for yours also, could I send you an account of myself more favourable than the past. But whatever notices you receive, and however fervent your prayers for me may be, in me they work no change, but seem entirely without consequence. I have indeed been for some days past pretty much indisposed with a violent cold, and am not sure that I have not in some little degree been affected with the feverish complaint that has lately been so prevalent, but I am better and hope soon to be well. Well in body, but when in spirit God only knows. In the meantime I am not worse; my nights indeed are somewhat molested by intimations from the enemy, but not to the same degree as usual. It distresses me, however, to hear from him alone, and to hear from him so often. His voice; his operations on my spirit, whether in the way of dreams or otherwise, and in short all his doings, are hateful to me beyond measure, and after so many years' experience of them are become almost intolerable.

Mrs. Unwin is pretty well, and unites in kind remembrance with, dear Sir, yours truly,

Wm. COWPER.

¹ '1793, Nov. 2.—I went to the Esq.'s, drank tea with Mr. Hayley, who promised to befriend Worthy and bestow a tool or two on him' (Mr. Killingworth was an amateur bookbinder).

TO THE REV. J. JEKYLL RYE¹

Weston, Nov. 3, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,—Sensible as I am of your kindness in taking such a journey, at no very pleasant season, merely to serve a friend of mine, I cannot allow my thanks to sleep till I may have the pleasure of seeing you. I hope never to show myself unmindful of so great a favour. Two lines which I received yesterday from Mr. Hurdis, written hastily on the day of decision, informed me that it was made in his favour, and by a majority of twenty.² I have great satisfaction in the event, and consequently hold myself indebted to all who at my instance have contributed to it.

You may depend on me for due attention to the honest clerk's request. When he called, it was not possible that I should answer your obliging letter; for he arrived here very early, and if I suffered any thing to interfere with my morning studies I should never accomplish my labours. Your hint concerning the subject for this year's copy³ is a very good one, and shall not be neglected.—I remain, sincerely
yours,

W. C.

¹ The last letter to Rye. On 12 Jan. 1795, six months before Cowper left Weston, Mr. Rye was presented to the rectory of Gayhurst with Stoke Goldington, close to Weston.

² A reference to the election of Hurdis to the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford.

³ The *Mortuary Verses* for 1793. These were the last of the series. They commence with the memorable line:

‘He lives who lives to God, alone.’

See *Globe Ed.* p. 369.

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2 G

TO MRS. COURTENAY¹

Weston, Nov. 4, 1793.

I SELDOM rejoice in a day of soaking rain like this; but in this, my dearest Catharina, I do rejoice sincerely, because it affords me an opportunity of writing to you, which if fair weather had invited us into the orchard walk at the usual hour, I should not easily have found. I am a most busy man, busy to a degree that sometimes half distracts me; but if complete distraction be occasioned by having the thoughts too much and too long attached to a single point, I am in no danger of it, with such a perpetual whirl are mine whisked about from one subject to another. When two poets meet there are fine doings, I can assure you. My Homer finds work for Hayley, and his *Life of Milton* work for me, so that we are neither of us one moment idle. Poor Mrs. Unwin in the meantime sits quiet in her corner, occasionally laughing at us both, and not seldom interrupting us with some question or remark, for which she is constantly rewarded by me with a 'Hush—hold your peace.' Bless yourself, my dear Catharina, that you are not connected with a poet, especially that you have not two to deal with; ladies who have, may be bidden indeed to hold their peace, but very little peace have they. How should they in fact have any, continually enjoined as they are to be silent?

The same fever that has been so epidemic there, has been severely felt here likewise; some have

¹ In 1819, on the death of Sir John Throckmorton, Mr. George Courtenay, Mrs. Courtenay's husband, succeeded to the baronetcy, so thenceforward she was styled Lady Throckmorton.

died, and a multitude have been in danger. Two under our own roof have been infected with it, and I am not sure that I have perfectly escaped myself, but I am now well again.

I have persuaded Hayley to stay a week longer, and again my hopes revive, that he may yet have an opportunity to know my friends before he returns into Sussex. I write amidst a chaos of interruptions: Hayley on one hand spouts Greek, and on the other hand Mrs. Unwin continues talking, sometimes to us, and sometimes because we are both too busy to attend to her, she holds a dialogue with herself.—Query, is not this a bull—and ought I not instead of dialogue to have said soliloquy?

Adieu ! With our united love to all your party, and with ardent wishes soon to see you all at Weston, I remain, my dearest Catharina, ever yours,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL

Weston, Nov. 5, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—In a letter from Lady Hesketh, which I received not long since, she informed me how very pleasantly she had spent some time at Wargrave. We now begin to expect her here, where our charms of situation are perhaps not equal to yours, yet by no means contemptible. She told me she had spoken to you in very handsome terms of the country round about us, but not so of our house and the view before. The house itself however is not unworthy some commendation; small as it is, it is neat, and neater than she is aware of; for my study and the room over it have been repaired and beautified this summer, and little more was wanting

to make it an abode sufficiently commodious for a man of my moderate desires. As to the prospect from it, that she misrepresented strangely, as I hope soon to have an opportunity to convince her by ocular demonstration. She told you, I know, of certain cottages opposite to us, or rather she described them as poor houses and hovels that effectually blind our windows. But none such exist. On the contrary, the opposite object, and the only one, is an orchard, so well planted, and with trees of such growth, that we seem to look into a wood, or rather to be surrounded by one. Thus, placed as we are in the midst of a village, we have none of the disagreeables that belong to such a position, and the village itself is one of the prettiest I know; terminated at one end by the church tower, seen through trees, and at the other, by a very handsome gateway, opening into a fine grove of elms, belonging to our neighbour Courtenay. How happy should I be to show it instead of describing it to you!—Adieu, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT¹

Weston, Nov. 10, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—You are very kind to consider my literary engagements, and to make them a reason for not interrupting me more frequently with a letter; but though I am indeed as busy as an author or an editor can well be, and am not apt to be overjoyed at the arrival of letters from uninteresting quarters, I shall always, I hope, have

¹ The last letter to Bagot. Bagot died in 1806, aged seventy-five.

leisure both to peruse and to answer those of my real friends, and to do both with pleasure.

I have to thank you much for your benevolent aid in the affair of my friend Hurdis. You have doubtless learned ere now that he has succeeded, and carried the prize by a majority of twenty. He is well qualified for the post he has gained. So much the better for the honour of the Oxonian laurel, and so much the more for the credit of those who have favoured him with their suffrages.

I am entirely of your mind respecting this conflagration¹ by which all Europe suffers at present, and is likely to suffer for a long time to come. The same mistake seems to have prevailed as in the American business. We then flattered ourselves that the colonies would prove an easy conquest; and when all the neighbour nations armed themselves against France, we imagined, I believe, that she too would be presently vanquished. But we begin already to be undeceived, and God only knows to what a degree we may find we have erred at the conclusion. Such, however, is the state of things all around us, as reminds me continually of the Psalmist's expression—‘*He shall break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*’—And I rather wish than hope, in some of my melancholy moods, that England herself may escape a fracture.—I remain truly yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

16 Nov. 1793.

DEAR SIR,—I have been truly concerned for your severe indisposition, and as truly rejoice in your

¹ England, Holland, Spain, Austria, and Prussia were at war with France. On October 31st the Twenty-two Girondins were executed. The Reign of Terror ensued.

recovery. This I should have told you sooner, had it been possible, but what with company and necessary attention to Homer, I seldom find a leisure moment.

I have, as usual, nothing to communicate concerning myself that will afford you any pleasure. When I awoke this morning I had a pretty distinct recollection of having been threatened in my sleep with such miseries as Hell is unacquainted with, and of being made to feel them. If I experience anything in my sleep it is generally of this kind, and in the daytime I meet with nothing to fortify me against the apprehensions, which such premonitions naturally excite, except the notices I receive from you. I will not say that they in no degree answer the purpose, but less encouragement they could not give me and give me any at all, for to me they still come destitute of all sweetness, energy and power.

Sometimes I have reason to believe that in my sleep I have been subject to something like a gracious impression, but it is only something like it, for it is generally accompanied with reproach, and not seldom so sarcastic in the manner of it that it causes me distress rather than consolation.

On the whole, my life is spent in evil bodings, and under a constant persuasion that finally I must perish. Often I think that nothing else is intended, and if for a few minutes I suppose an intention more desirable I always expect that it will be frustrated.

Farewell. With Mrs. Unwin's kind remembrances, I remain sincerely yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY¹

[AT THE REV. MR. CLARKE'S, HYDE PARK WALL,
NO. 1 KNIGHTSBRIDGE, LONDON]

22 Nov. 1793.

YOUR two comfortable letters, my dear brother, have just reached me, and well merit a longer answer than I shall have opportunity to give them. I rejoice most sincerely that your health is restored, and had waited impatiently for the news of it, being the more alarmed on your account, because relapses are generally more severe than first attacks.

Lady Hesketh² and I were at breakfast together, when your letters arrived, and I had told her among other things, in which you were concerned, that of all the men I ever knew, you are the most zealous and active in the service of your friends. Accordingly when we found that you are at this very time engaged in the service of no less than four, you may be sure we were not a little diverted. Heaven speed you in all your endeavours.

I am glad for his own sake that Lord Thurlow's behaviour has pleased you. He will not, I am sure,

¹ Hayley left Weston on Nov. 13.

² Lady Hesketh arrived about November 16th. She had arranged to come later, but altered her mind in order to avoid meeting Hannah Willson, who would at Christmas be home from boarding-school. She had written to the Rev. John Johnson, 27 Sept. 1793:—‘I purpose therefore to be there in the month of December or January, but at that time I rather apprehend meeting with Miss Hannekin. I mentioned in a letter I wrote him [Cowper] that though I wished to come, I was kept back by apprehensions on Hannah’s account, as I had a pretty-looking young man for a servant, who might be unable to stand the fire of Miss Hannah’s bright eyes.’—*Letters of Lady Hesketh*. Edited by C. B. Johnson, 1901. Owing, however, to Cowper’s breakdown, Lady Hesketh stayed at Weston till April 1794.

forfeit your favourable opinion without deserving it. What you report to me from the lips of my bookseller has taken a load from my spirits, under which they fainted. Once more I cherish a hope that this Miltonic business may possibly be accomplished.

Lady H. expresses much regret that you found it impossible to give us your company longer, and General Cowper desires to know when your *Life of Milton* is to be published, for, cost what it may, he is determined to have it. His sentiments of this great man, this greatest of men, your idol and mine, and of his abominable critic,¹ are exactly in unison with ours.

My Mary returns you many thanks for the warmth-giving present you have taught her to expect, and as for the *Virgil* that you send to me, I will clasp it to my breast, and doubt not that I shall find it excite a warmth there equal to any that might be produced by the fleecy hosiery itself, or rather far superior.

I rejoice that the dear young academicio² is well, and with our triple kindest remembrances remain ever yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JAMES HURDIS

Weston, Nov. 24, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,—Though my congratulations have been delayed, you have no friend, numerous as your friends are, who has more sincerely rejoiced in your success than I. It was no small mortification to me to find that three out of the six whom I had engaged, were not qualified to vote. You have pre-

¹ Dr. Samuel Johnson.

² Hayley's son Tom.

vailed however, and by a considerable majority ; there is therefore no room left for regret. When your short note arrived which gave me the agreeable news of your victory, our friend of Eartham was with me, and shared largely in the joy that I felt on the occasion. He left me but a few days since, having spent somewhat more than a fortnight here ; during which time we employed all our leisure hours in the revisal of his *Life of Milton*. It is now finished, and a very finished work it is ; and one that will do great honour, I am persuaded, to the biographer, and the excellent man of injured memory who is the subject of it. As to my own concern with the works of this first of poets, which has been long a matter of burthensome contemplation, I have the happiness to find at last that I am at liberty to postpone my labours. While I expected that my commentary would be called for in the ensuing spring, I looked forward to the undertaking with dismay, not seeing a shadow of probability that I should be ready to answer the demand. For this ultimate revisal of my Homer, together with the notes, occupies completely at present (and will for some time longer) all the little leisure that I have for study : leisure which I gain at this season of the year by rising long before daylight.

You are now become a nearer neighbour, and as your professorship, I hope, will not engross you wholly, will find an opportunity to give me your company at Weston. Let me hear from you soon, tell me how you like your new office, and whether you perform the duties of it with pleasure to yourself. With much pleasure to others you will, I doubt not, and with equal advantage. W. C.

TO ?

Weston Underwood, Novr. 27, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,—It is some time since I learned by a second letter from Mrs. Conway that you had been so kind as to seek her out, and in addition to the bountiful relief you gave her, had given her also some assurance that if the settlement she had then in view should fail her, you would endeavour to find one that might suit her elsewhere. Ignorant of your address she has written to me again, enclosing what I enclose to you, which will speak for itself. Your kindness and benevolence expose you to much trouble, but prevent your thinking it such. I will therefore make no apology for that which I give you now, but conclude myself with every sentiment of esteem and affection, my dear Sir, most truly yours,

W.M. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Weston, Nov. 29, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have risen while the owls are still hooting, to pursue my accustomed labours in the mine of Homer; but before I enter upon them, shall give the first moment of daylight to the purpose of thanking you for your last letter, containing many pleasant articles of intelligence, with nothing to abate the pleasantness of them, except the single circumstance that we are not likely to see you here so soon as I expected. My hope was, that the first frost would bring you, and the amiable painter¹ with you. If, however, you are prevented

¹ Thomas Lawrence.

by the business of your respective professions, you are well prevented, and I will endeavour to be patient. When the latter was here, he mentioned one day the subject of Diomedes's horses, driven under the axle of his chariot by the thunderbolt which fell at their feet, as a subject for his pencil. It is certainly a noble one, and therefore worthy of his study and attention. It occurred to me at the moment, but I know not what it was that made me forget it again the next moment, that the horses of Achilles flying over the foss, with Patroclus and Automedon in the chariot, would be a good companion for it. Should you happen to recollect this, when you next see him, you may submit it, if you please, to his consideration. I stumbled yesterday on another subject, which reminded me of said excellent artist, as likely to afford a fine opportunity to the expression that he could give it. It is found in the shooting-match in the twenty-third book of the *Iliad*, between Meriones and Teucer. The former cuts the string with which the dove is tied to the mast-head, and sets her at liberty ; the latter standing at his side, in all the eagerness of emulation, points an arrow at the mark with his right hand, while with his left he snatches the bow from his competitor. He is a fine poetical figure ; but Mr. Lawrence himself must judge whether or not he promises as well for the canvass.

He does great honour to my physiognomy by his intention to get it engraved ; and though I think I foresee that this *private publication* will grow in time into a publication of absolute publicity, I find it impossible to be dissatisfied with any thing that seems eligible both to him and you. To say the truth,

when a man has once turned his mind inside out for the inspection of all who choose to inspect it, to make a secret of his face seems but little better than a self-contradiction. At the same time, however, I shall be best pleased if it be kept, according to your intentions, as a rarity.

I have lost Hayley, and begin to be uneasy at not hearing from him: tell me about him when you write.

I should be happy to have a work of mine embellished by Lawrence, and made a companion for a work of Hayley's. It is an event to which I look forward with the utmost complacence. I cannot tell you what a relief I feel it, not to be pressed for Milton.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE

Weston, Dec. 8, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—In my last I forgot to thank you for the box of books, containing also the pamphlets. We have read, that is to say my cousin has, who reads to us in an evening, the history of *Jonathan Wild*;¹ and found it highly entertaining. The satire on great men is witty, and I believe perfectly just: we have no censure to pass on it, unless that we think the character of Mrs. Heartfree not well sustained,—not quite delicate in the latter part of it,—and that the constant effect of her charms upon every man who sees her has a sameness in it that is tiresome, and betrays either much carelessness, or idleness, or lack of invention. It is possible indeed that the author might intend by this circumstance a

¹ *The History of the Life of the Late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great*, by Henry Fielding, published in 1743.

satirical glance at novelists, whose heroines are generally all bewitching; but it is a fault that he had better have noticed in another manner, and not have exemplified in his own.

The first volume of *Man As He Is* has lain unread in my study window this twelvemonth, and would have been returned unread to its owner, had not my cousin come in good time to save it from that disgrace. We are now reading it, and find it excellent,—abounding with wit and just sentiment, and knowledge both of books and men. . . . I have finished Homer, except that in transcribing the alterations I now and then make a new one. Adieu!

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, Dec. 8, 1793.

I HAVE waited, and waited impatiently, for a line from you, and am at last determined to send you one, to inquire what is become of you, and why you are silent so much longer than usual.

I want to know many things which only you can tell me, but especially I want to know what has been the issue of your conference with Nicol. Has he seen your work? I am impatient for the appearance of it, because impatient to have the spotless credit of the great poet's character, as a man and a citizen, vindicated as it ought to be, and as it never will be again.

It is a great relief to me that my Miltonic labours are suspended.¹ I am now busy in transcribing the alterations of Homer, having finished the whole re-

¹ These labours were never resumed. The unfinished work was published by Hayley in 1808 for the benefit of Samuel Rose's second son, Cowper's godchild.

visal. I must then write a new Preface, which done, I shall endeavour immediately to descant on *The Four Ages*. Adieu, my dear brother,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL¹

Dec. 10, 1793.

You mentioned, my dear friend, in your last letter, an unfavourable sprain that you had received, which you apprehended might be very inconvenient to you for some time to come; and having learned also from Lady Hesketh the same unwelcome intelligence, in terms still more alarming than those in which you related the accident yourself, I cannot but be anxious, as well as my cousin, to know the present state of it; and shall truly rejoice to hear that it is in a state of recovery. Give us a line of information on this subject, as soon as you can conveniently, and you will much oblige us.

I write by morning candle-light; my literary business obliging me to be an early riser. Homer demands me: finished, indeed, but the alterations not transcribed; a work to which I am now hastening as fast as possible. The transcript ended, which is likely to amount to a good sizeable volume, I must write a new preface; and then farewell to Homer for ever! And if the remainder of my days be a little gilded with the profits of this long and laborious work, I shall not regret the time that I have bestowed on it.—I remain my dear friend, affectionately yours,

Wm. COWPER.

¹ The last letter to Hill. Hill lived to an advanced age. Mrs. Hill, who survived her husband, died in 1824.

Can you give us any news of Lord Howe's¹ Armada; concerning which we may enquire, as our forefathers did of the Spanish,—‘*An in cælum sublata sit, an in Tartarum deppressa?*’

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, Dec. 17, 1793.

O Jove! and all ye Gods! grant this my son
To prove, like me, pre-eminent in Troy;
In valour such, and firmness of command!
Be he extoll'd, when he returns from fight,
As far his sire's superior! may he slay
His enemy, bring home his gory spoils,
And may his mother's heart o'erflow with joy!

I ROSE this morning at six o'clock, on purpose to translate this prayer again, and to write to my dear brother. Here you have it, such as it is,—not perfectly according to my own liking, but as well as I could make it, and I think better than either yours or Lord Thurlow's. You with your six lines have made yourself stiff and ungraceful, and he with his seven has produced as good prose as heart can wish, but no poetry at all. A scrupulous attention to the letter has spoiled you both; you have neither the spirit nor the manner of Homer. A portion of both may be found I believe in my version, but not so much as I wish;—it is better however than the printed one. His lordship's two first lines I cannot very well understand; he seems to me to give a sense to the

¹ When the war with France broke out in Feb. 1793, Lord Howe took command of the channel fleet. On the 1st of June 1794 he defeated the French off Ushant.

original that does not belong to it. Hector, I apprehend, does not say, ‘Grant that he may prove himself my son, and be eminent, etc. ;—but grant that this my son may prove eminent,’—which is a material difference. In the latter sense I find the simplicity of an ancient; in the former, that is to say in the notion of a man proving himself his father’s son by similar merit, the finesse and dexterity of a modern. His lordship too makes the man who gives the young hero his commendation, the person who returns from battle; whereas Homer makes the young hero himself that person; at least if Clarke is a just interpreter, which I suppose is hardly to be disputed.

If my old friend would look into my Preface, he would find a principle laid down there, which perhaps it would not be easy to invalidate, and which properly attended to would equally secure a translation from stiffness, and from wildness. The principle I mean is this—‘Close, but not so close as to be servile! free, but not so free as to be licentious !’ A superstitious fidelity loses the spirit, and a loose deviation the sense, of the translated author: a happy moderation in either case is the only possible way of preserving both.

Thus have I disciplined you both; and now, if you please, you may both discipline me. I shall not enter my version in my book till it has undergone your strictures at least; and should you write to the noble critic again, you are welcome to submit it to his. We are three awkward fellows indeed, if we cannot amongst us make a tolerably good translation of six lines of Homer.

Adieu ! We are much as usual, Mrs. U. not

worse, Lady H. always cheerful, I, sometimes smothered in melancholy. W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE¹

2 Jan. 1794.

I ROSE this morning, and have risen many mornings past, under a load of dejection and melancholy uncommon even with me, but not uncommon at this season of the year. This dreadful affection of my spirits wears off in some measure as the day proceeds, but while it lasts it makes all composition of either prose or poetry impracticable. God knows that I write at this moment under the pressure of sadness not to be described. Were I less absorbed in miserable self than I am, the horrid condition of Europe, and especially the affairs of England, would touch me deeply. But as it is, whether towns are taken or battles won or lost,² seems to affect me little.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

2 Jan. 1794.

DEAR SIR,—My New Year has begun with added shades of misery and despair. Yesterday when I awoke I heard as follows :—

‘Spend the rest of your life in sighs and groanings.’

This morning I awoke with these :—

¹ Last letter to Rose. Rose died in 1804. He was in his thirty-eighth year.

² Toulon, which had surrendered to a British fleet, was retaken by the French, owing largely to the energies of Napoleon, 19th December 1793; St. Just a few days later repelled the Prussians at Weissembourg.

'Make a fool of me no more. I will never begin.' That is to say—*I will never begin to deliver you.* So I understood them at the moment, and so I understand them still.

Can there be yea and nay with God? In His dealings with other men there can be no such thing, but His dealings with me are not like His dealings with other men, nor have been these twenty years. There is but one key to the difference; one only solution of it. He considers me as a traitor, and acts towards me as He does for that reason. I can hope nothing—believe nothing—I am and have long been the most miserable of the human race, and He knows it. Knows how ardently I wish that I had never existed, yet continually adds more and more to my burthen. How is this reconcilable with any idea that He has mercy for me?

Wm. COWPER.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

Weston, Jan. 5, 1794.

MY DEAR HAYLEY,—I have waited, but waited in vain, for a propitious moment, when I might give my old friend's objections the consideration they deserve; I shall at last be forced to send a vague answer, unworthy to be sent to a person accustomed, like him, to close reasoning and abstruse discussion, for I rise after ill rest, and with a frame of mind perfectly unsuited to the occasion. I sit too at the window for light's sake, where I am so cold that my pen slips out of my fingers. First, I will give you a translation *de novo* of this

untranslateable prayer.¹ It is shaped as nearly as I could contrive to his lordship's ideas, but I have little hope that it will satisfy him.

Grant Jove, and all ye gods, that this my son
Be, as myself have been, illustrious here !
A valiant man ! and let him reign in Troy ;
May all who witness his return from fight
Hereafter, say——he far excels his sire ;
And let him bring back gory trophies, stripp'd
From foes slain by him, to his mother's joy.

Imlac, in *Rasselas*, says—I forget to whom—‘ You have convinced me that it is impossible to be a poet.’² In like manner I might say to his lordship, you have convinced me that it is impossible to be a translator; to be a translator, on his terms at least, is, I am sure, impossible. On his terms I would defy Homer himself, were he alive, to translate the *Paradise Lost* into Greek. Yet Milton had Homer much in his eye when he composed that poem. Whereas Homer never thought of me or my translation. There are minutiae in every language, which transfused into another will spoil the version. Such extreme fidelity is in fact unfaithful; such close resemblance takes away all likeness. The original is elegant, easy, natural; the copy is clumsy, constrained, unnatural. To what is this owing? To the adoption of terms not congenial to your purpose, and of a context such as no man writing an original work would make use of. Homer is everything that a poet should be. A translation of Homer so made, will be every-

¹ See letter to Hayley, 17th Dec. 1793.

² It was Rasselas who cried out to Imlac, ‘ Enough ! thou hast convinced me that no human being can ever be a poet.’—*Rasselas*, chap. xi.; Murphy’s ed. of Johnson’s Works, vol. v. p. 449.

thing that a translation of Homer should not be; because it will be written in no language under heaven;—it will be English, and it will be Greek; and therefore it will be neither. He is the man, whoever he be—(I do not pretend to be that man myself); he is the man best qualified as a translator of Homer, who has drenched, and steeped, and soaked himself in the effusions of his genius, till he has imbibed their colour to the bone; and who, when he is thus dyed through and through, distinguishing between what is essentially Greek, and what may be habited in English, rejects the former, and is faithful to the latter, as far as the purposes of fine poetry will permit, and no further: this, I think, may be easily proved. Homer is everywhere remarkable either for ease, dignity, or energy of expression; for grandeur of conception, and a majestic flow of numbers. If we copy him so closely as to make every one of these excellent properties of his absolutely unattainable, which will certainly be the effect of too close a copy, instead of translating we murder him. Therefore, after all that his lordship has said, I still hold freedom to be an indispensable. Freedom, I mean, with respect to the expression; freedom so limited, as never to leave behind the *matter*; but at the same time indulged with a sufficient scope to secure the spirit, and as much as possible of the manner. I say as much as possible, because an English manner must differ from a Greek one, in order to be graceful, and for this there is no remedy. Can an ungraceful, awkward translation of Homer be a good one? No. But a graceful, easy, natural, faithful version of him, will not that be a

good one? Yes. Allow me but this, and I insist upon it, that such a one may be produced on my principles, and can be produced on no other.

Teedon, with his best respects, entreats you to inquire of the retired bookbinder whom you mentioned when you were here, if he has a strong press to dispose of that will pinch close — for his own wants power. If he has not one himself he may possibly know who has. Adieu! my dear brother. I have now tired both you and myself; and with the love of the whole trio, remain, yours ever,

W. C.

I have not had time to criticise his lordship's other version. You know how little time I have for anything, and can tell him so.

Reading his lordship's sentiments over again, I am inclined to think that in all I have said, I have only given him back the same in other terms. He disallows both the absolute *free*, and the absolute *close*;—so do I; and, if I understand myself, have said so in my Preface. He wishes to recommend a medium, though he will not call it so; so do I: only we express it differently. What is it then we dispute about? My head is not good enough to-day to discover.¹

TO SAMUEL TEEDON

10 Jan. 1794.

DEAR SIR,—I have suffered much since I wrote last, more than tongue can tell. My despair and

¹ This is the last letter to Hayley. Hayley's *Life and Letters of Cooper* appeared in 1803. The later editions (1808, 1809, 1812) contained supplementary letters. Hayley died in 1820.

terror have been equal to, if not greater than any I felt in the dreadful time of my last convictions, and the reasons I had for them seem to have been not less important.

While I thought on my last note to you, in which I expressed my apprehensions that I had little to expect from any promises given you in my favour, because no terms are to be kept with me whom God I fear considers as a traitor—these words were distinctly spoken to me:

‘ You understand me right, William.’

Again, I dreamed that in our parlour at Olney my thoughts were suddenly carried to the offence of which I have in time past informed you, and from which originated all my misery twenty years since, when my soul seemed to be taken as it were out of me and carried up to heaven, though I saw nothing nor heard any voice, where it was for a few seconds filled with infinite despair and horror, after which I awoke and heard these words :

‘ The dreadful visit is paid.’

I tremble, while I write, at the recollection of these things, and lest they should make you despair of me as much as I of myself. Whatever be the effect, write nothing that may distress poor Mrs. Unwin, who has already suffered too much for my sake, and more than her health could bear.—Yours sincerely,

Wm. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL TEEDON¹

14 Jan. 1794.

DEAR SIR.—You desire to know how I do. I cannot tell you. It is hurtful to me to write or speak about my own sufferings. Three days since, I had a very slight degree of liberty to cry for mercy; and felt my spirit relieved by it for the remainder of the day. But from that time to the present my sufferings day and night have much enfeebled me. I hide my distress as well as I can from poor Mrs. Unwin, but in fact it cannot be hidden. Never man was worried as I am, and unless God interpose marvellously for my deliverance I must perish.—Yours sincerely, Wm. C.

I have your letter of Sunday.

Since I wrote the above I have had the Lord's presence largely for a few minutes.

In January 1794 Cowper had again sunk into the most pitiable state. Sometimes he would sit still and silent as death, and it was with difficulty that his friends could get him to take food. The last entry in Teedon's Diary (2 Feb. 1794) runs, 'Exceedingly low I found the Esquire., yet I thought it was a good sign he desired my prayers that he might not fall into the hands of God nor

¹ This is the last letter to Teedon. Teedon died in June 1798. He was buried at Olney Church on June 9th. Writing to the Rev. John Johnson, 10 July 1798, Lady Hesketh says: 'You do quite right to keep poor Teedon's death a secret [that is in respect to Cowper], and will be equally right in continuing his pension to poor Killingworth.' Killingworth married Polly Taylor (supposed to be Teedon's daughter), 18th April 1808. Both were nearly sixty. Mrs. Killingworth died in 1817, and Mr. Killingworth in 1828.

into the hands of Satan.' Hayley, who in April was making a third visit to Weston, had for some years been trying to get a pension for Cowper. First he applied to Thurlow, but failed. 'It was my second aim,' observes Hayley, 'to make Mr. Pitt accomplish the same object from personal regard to me, united to his esteem and compassion for afflicted genius.' In this Hayley failed too, for Pitt did not 'do the noble thing he had promised to do, till he was excited to it by a peer of considerable consequence' (Lord Spencer) 'whom he had political reasons for wishing to oblige.'¹ The news of the grant of the pension—which was £300 per annum²—arrived at Weston on the 23rd of April, but Cowper was too far gone to exhibit even a glimmering of joy. Sometimes he would walk incessantly backwards and forwards in his study like a tiger in a cage. The household was in confusion. Hannah Willson, who had turned out ill, was 'amazingly extravagant.' Instead of repaying the kindness of her benefactress, she delighted to sweep the village street with costly dresses and to display 'feathers a yard long.' Mrs. Unwin, who had had another attack and was 'a dreadful spectacle,' added by her irritability, and her exactingness, to the poet's sufferings. Lady Hesketh was in despair.³

Finally came the proposition from the Rev. John

¹ MS. in possession of Mr. John T. Young, F.G.S., of the *City Press*.

² The original document authorising this payment of the pension—signed by Pitt and countersigned by George III.—is preserved in the Cowper Museum at Olney.

³ Sometimes her troubles were lighted up with very amusing incidents. One of these, which had reference to the gift to Cowper of a silver tea-pot, is related on p. 40 of *The Letters of Lady Hesketh*.

Johnson that the invalids should be removed to Norfolk. Only a temporary absence was at first contemplated, but Cowper, with the presentiment that it would be permanent, wrote on a panel of the window shutter in his bedchamber the sad lines :—

Farewell, dear scenes, for ever closed to me ;
Oh, for what sorrows must I now exchange ye !

The lines are still on the shutter.

He then added :—

Me miserable ! how could I escape
Infinite wrath and infinite despair !
Whom Death, Earth, Heaven, and Hell consigned to ruin,
Whose friend was God, but God swore not to aid me !

These lines have since been obliterated.

The removal appears to have taken place on July 28th (1795). After spending three weeks at North Tuddenham in Norfolk, the invalids were taken to Mundesley on the coast.

VIII. FROM NORFOLK

TO LADY HESKETH, CHELTENHAM, GLOUCESTER-SHIRE

Mundesley, near North Walsham, Aug. 27, 1795.

HOPELESS as ever, and chiefly to gratify myself by once more setting pen to paper, I address a very few lines to one whom it would be a comfort to me to gratify as much by sending them. The most forlorn of beings, I tread a shore under the burthen of infinite despair, that I once trod all cheerfulness and joy. I view every vessel that approaches the coast with an eye of jealousy and fear, lest it arrive with a commission to seize me. But my insensi-

bility, which you say is a mystery to you, because it seems incompatible with such fear, has the effect of courage, and enables me to go forth, as if on purpose to place myself in the way of danger. The cliff is here of a height that it is terrible to look down from ; and yesterday evening, by moonlight, I passed sometimes within a foot of the edge of it, from which to have fallen would probably have been to be dashed in pieces. But though to have been dashed in pieces would perhaps have been best for me, I shrunk from the precipice, and am waiting to be dashed in pieces by other means. At two miles distance on the coast is a solitary pillar of rock, that the crumbling cliff has left at the high water-mark. I have visited it twice, and have found it an emblem of myself. Torn from my natural connections, I stand alone and expect the storm that shall displace me.

I have no expectation that I shall ever see you more, though Samuel assures me that I shall visit Weston again, and that you will meet me there. My terrors, when I left it, would not permit me to say—Farewell for ever—which now I do ; wishing but vainly wishing to see you yet once more, and equally wishing that I could now as confidently, and as warmly as once I could, subscribe myself affectionately yours ; but every feeling that would warrant the doing it, has, as you too well know, long since forsaken the bosom of

W. C.

Mr. Johnson is gone to North Walsham, and knows not that I write.

Mrs. Unwin sends her affectionate respects and compliments.

TO THE REV. JOHN BUCHANAN,
OF WESTON UNDERWOOD

Mundesley, 5 Sept. 1795.

'To interpose a little ease,
Let my frail thoughts dally with false surmise.'

I WILL forget for a moment, that to whomsoever I may address myself, a letter from me can no otherwise be welcome, than as a curiosity. To you, Sir, I address this; urged to it by extreme penury of employment, and the desire I feel to learn something of what is doing, and has been done at Weston (my beloved Weston !) since I left it.

The coldness of these blasts, even in the hottest days, has been such, that added to the irritation of the salt spray, with which they are always charged, they have occasioned me an inflammation in the eyelids, which threatened a few days since to confine me entirely; but by absenting myself as much as possible from the beach, and guarding my face with an umbrella, that inconvenience is in some degree abated. My chamber commands a very near view of the ocean, and the ships at high water approach the coast so closely, that a man furnished with better eyes than mine might, I doubt not, discern the sailors from the window. No situation, at least when the weather is clear and bright, can be pleasanter; which you will easily credit, when I add that it imparts something a little resembling pleasure even to me.—Gratify me with news from Weston! If Mr. Gregson, and your neighbours the Courtenays are there, mention me to them in such terms as you see good. Tell me if my poor birds

are living? I never see the herbs I used to give them without a recollection of them, and sometimes am ready to gather them, forgetting that I am not at home. Pardon this intrusion!

Mrs. Unwin continues much as usual.

TO LADY HESKETH, CHELTENHAM

MR. JOHNSON is again absent; gone to Mattishall, a circumstance to which I am indebted for an opportunity to answer your letter as soon almost as I have received it. Were he present, I feel that I could not do it.—You say it gives you pleasure to hear from me, and I resolve to forget for a moment my conviction that it is impossible for me to give pleasure to any body. You have heard much from my lips that I am sure has given you none; if what comes from my pen be less unpalatable, none has therefore so strong a claim to it as yourself.

My walks on the sea-shore have been paid for by swelled and inflamed eyelids, and I now recollect that such was always the condition of mine in the same situation. A natural effect I suppose, at least upon eyelids so subject to disorder as mine, of the salt spray and cold winds, which on the coast are hardly ever less than violent. I now therefore abandon my favourite walk, and wander in lanes and under hedges. As heavy a price I have paid for a long journey, performed on foot to a place called Hazeborough.¹ That day was indeed a day spent in walking. I was much averse to the journey, both on account of the distance and the uncertainty of what I should find there; but Mr.

¹ Happisburgh.

Johnson insisted. We set out accordingly, and I was almost ready to sink with fatigue long before we reached the place of our destination. The only inn was full of company; but my companion having an opportunity to borrow a lodging for an hour or two, he did so, and thither we retired. We learned on inquiry, that the place is eight miles distant from this, and though, by the help of a guide, we shortened it about a mile in our return, the length of the way occasioned me a fever, which I have had now these four days, and perhaps shall not be rid of in four more; perhaps never. Mr. J. and Samuel, after dinner, visited the light-house. A gratification which would have been none to me for several reasons, but especially because I found no need to add to the number of steps I had to take before I should find myself at home again. I learned, however, from them that it is a curious structure. The building is circular, but the stairs are not so; flight above flight, with a commodious landing at every twentieth stair, they ascend to a height of four stories; and there is a spacious and handsome apartment at every landing. The light is given by the patent lamp, of which there are two ranges: six lamps in the upper range, and five in the lower; both ranges, as you may suppose, at the top of the house. Each lamp has a broad silver reflector behind it. The present occupant was once commander of a large merchantman, but, having chastised a boy of his crew with too much severity, was displaced and consequently ruined. He had, however, a friend in the Trinity House, who, soon after this was built, asked him if he would accept the charge of it; and the cashiered captain, judging

it better to be such a lamp-lighter than to starve, very readily and very wisely closed with the offer. He has only the trouble of scouring the silver plates every day, and of rising every night at twelve to trim the lamps, for which he has a competent salary (Sammy forgets the amount of it), and he and his family a pleasant and comfortable abode.

I have said as little of myself as I could, that my letter might be more worth the postage. My next will perhaps be less worth it, should any next ensue ; for I meet with little variety, and shall not be very willing to travel fifteen miles on foot again, to find it. I have seen no fish since I came here, except a dead sprat upon the sands, and one piece of cod, from Norwich, too stale to be eaten. Adieu.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH, CHELTENHAM

Mundesley, Sept. 26, 1795.

MR. JOHNSON is gone forth again, and again, for the last time I suppose that I shall ever do it, I address a line to you. I knew not of his intentions to leave me till the day before he did so. Like every thing else that constitutes my wretched lot, this departure of his was sudden, and shocked me accordingly. He enjoined me before he went, if I wrote at all in his absence, to write to Mr. Newton. But I cannot, and so I told him. Whither he is gone I know not ; at least I know not by information from himself. Samuel tells me that he thinks his destination is to Weston. But why to Weston is unimaginable to me. I shall never see Weston more. I have been tossed like a ball into a far

country, from which there is no rebound for me. There indeed I lived a life of infinite despair, and such is my life in Norfolk. Such indeed it would be in any given spot upon the face of the globe ; but to have passed the little time that remained to me there, was the desire of my heart. My heart's desire, however, has been always frustrated in everything that it ever settled on, and by means that have made my disappointments inevitable. When I left Weston I despaired of reaching Norfolk, and now that I have reached Norfolk, I am equally hopeless of ever reaching Weston more. What a lot is mine ! Why was existence given to a creature that might possibly, and would probably, become wretched in the degree that I have been so ? and whom misery, such as mine, was almost sure to overwhelm in a moment. But the question is vain. I existed by a decree, from which there was no appeal, and on terms the most tremendous, because unknown to, and even unsuspected by me ; difficult to be complied with had they been foreknown, and unforeknown, impracticable. Of this truth I have no witness but my own experience ; a witness whose testimony will not be admitted. But farewell to a subject with which I can only weary you, and blot the paper to no purpose.

You assure me that I shall see you again ; tell me where, and when, I shall see you, and I will believe you if it be possible.

Samuel¹ desires me to present his duty to you.

¹ Sam Roberts and his wife, 'Nanny,' who had accompanied Cowper to Norfolk, returned to Weston for good in 1796. Cowper allowed them an annuity, which Lady Hesketh continued to pay them after Cowper's death. Nanny Roberts died in 1809, Sam in 1832. Their tombstone is in Weston churchyard, close to the church tower.

His wife is gone to Weston, and he wishes me to say that if Mrs. Herbert has any concerns there that Nanny can settle for her, and will give her the necessary directions, she may depend upon their being exactly attended to. With Mrs. Unwin's respects, I remain the forlorn and miserable being I was when I wrote last.

W. C.

On Oct. 7, 1795, the invalids were removed to Dunham Lodge, near Swaffham, Mr. Johnson's belief being that constant change of scene would be more beneficial than anything else.

TO LADY HESKETH

Jan. 22, 1796.

I LITTLE thought ever to have addressed you by letter more. I have become daily and hourly worse, ever since I left Mundesley: there I had something like a gleam of hope allowed me, that possibly my life might be granted me for a longer time than I had been used to suppose, though only on the dreadful terms of accumulating future misery on myself, and for no other reason; but even that hope has long since forsaken me, and I now consider this letter as the warrant of my own dreadful end; as the fulfilment of a word heard in better days, at least six and twenty years ago.¹ A word which to have understood at the time when it reached me, would have been, at least might have been, a happiness indeed to me; but my cruel destiny denied me the privilege of understanding any thing that, in the horrible

¹ See vol. i. p. 132. The 'word,' as his other letters show, was spoken at the end of February 1773—twenty-three years previous, not twenty-six years.

moment that came winged with my immediate destruction, might have served to aid me. You know my story far better than I am able to relate it. Infinite despair is a sad prompter. I expect that in six days' time, at the latest, I shall no longer foresee, but feel the accomplishment of all my fears. Oh, lot of unexampled misery incurred in a moment! Oh wretch! to whom death and life are alike impossible! Most miserable at present in this, that being thus miserable I have my senses continued to me, only that I may look forward to the worst. It is certain, at least, that I have them for no other purpose, and but very imperfectly even for this. My thoughts are like loose and dry sand, which the closer it is grasped slips the sooner away. Mr. Johnson reads to me, but I lose every other sentence through the inevitable wanderings of my mind, and experience, as I have these two years, the same shattered mode of thinking on every subject, and on all occasions. If I seem to write with more connection, it is only because the gaps do not appear.

Adieu.—I shall not be here to receive your answer, neither shall I ever see you more. Such is the expectation of the most desperate and most miserable of all beings,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH, BATH

February, 19, 1796.

COULD I address you as I used to do, with what delight should I begin this letter! But that delight, and every other sensation of the kind, has long since forsaken me for ever. The consequence is, that I neither know for what cause I write, nor of what

materials to compose what shall be written; my groans, could they be expressed here, would presently fill the paper. I write, however, at the instance of Mr. Johnson, and, as I always think, so always on the last occasion more assuredly than on any of the former, for the very last time. He, I know, inquired in a letter he lately sent you, when we might expect you here. Whatever day you name in your reply, will be a day that I shall never see; nor have I even the hope, unless it come to-morrow, that your reply itself will reach this place before I am taken from it. The uncertainty is dreadful, and all remedy for it impracticable. But why tell you what I think of myself, of my present condition, and of the means employed to reduce me to it? My thoughts on all these subjects are too well known to you to need any recital here. All my themes of misery may be summed in one word, He who made me, regrets that ever He did. Many years have passed since I learned this terrible truth from Himself, and the interval has been spent accordingly. Adieu.—I shall write to you no more. I am promised months of continuance here, and should be somewhat less a wretch in my present feelings, could I credit the promise, but effectual care is taken that I shall not. The night contradicts the day, and I go down the torrent of time into the gulf that I have expected to plunge into so long. A few hours remain, but among those few not one is found, a part of which I shall ever employ in writing to you again. Once more, therefore, adieu—and adieu to the pen for ever. I suppress a thousand agonies to add only

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH, NEW NORFOLK STREET,
GROSVENOR SQUARE, LONDON

30th May 1796.

OBLIGED to write, but more disqualified for it than ever, I once again address you in the style of misery and the deepest despair. One thing and only one is left me, the wish that I had never existed. Hunted into this terrible state of mind so long since, what now can I look for? What can remain for me to say, but what all my former letters said, and what now I repeat in this? To exist in this place if I might, and not to suffer immediately what I am threatened with, oh that I could hope for it! And oh that there could be pity, or if not that, at least forbearance for the most forlorn of Beings! Farewell.

W. C.

In September (1796) the invalids paid a second visit to Mundesley, and at the end of October removed to Johnson's house at East Dereham.

Mrs. Unwin, who for some time had been gradually sinking, died on the 17th of December 1796. She is buried at East Dereham.

The rest of Cowper's days were spent alternately at Mundesley and East Dereham, his constant attendant being Miss Margaret Perowne, a friend of Johnson's.

TO LADY HESKETH

15th May 1797.

To you once more, and too well I know why, I am under cruel necessity of writing. Every line that I have ever sent you, I have believed, under

the influence of infinite despair, the last that I should ever send. This I know to be so. Whatever be your condition, either now or hereafter, it is heavenly compared with mine even at this moment. It is unnecessary to add that this comes from the most miserable of beings, whom a terrible minute¹ made such.²

TO LADY HESKETH

June 1, 1798.

UNDER the necessity of addressing you, as I have done in other days, though these are such as seem to myself absolutely to forbid it—I say as usual, my dear cousin; and having said it am utterly at a loss to proceed. Mr. Johnson says that we are going on Monday to Mundesley, and bids me to tell you so; but at present he acknowledges himself that it is uncertain whether we go or not, since we cannot know till to-morrow whether there is place for us there, or the lodgings be already full.

Whether the journey be practicable or otherwise, and wherever I am, my distress is infinite; for I see no possible way of escape, in my circumstances, from miseries such as, I doubt not, will far exceed my most terrible expectations. To wish, therefore, that I had never existed, which has been my only reasonable wish for many years, seems all that remains to one who once dreamed of happiness, but awoke never to dream of it again, and who under the necessity of concluding as he began, subscribes himself your affectionate

W.M. COWPER.

¹ See vol. i. p. 133.

² Cowper's former letters from Dereham were written in his usual free and distinct hand; in this the writing is changed: it is much smaller, and the characters are all separate.

TO LADY HESKETH

July 26, 1798.

DEAR COUSIN,—How I can think as I do, and write as I am required to do, I know not; my thoughts indeed are such that, their sad complexion out of the question, they deserve to be called by some other name, if language would furnish me with some other for them.¹ I am, however, to inform you that Lady Spencer² was here the day before yesterday; that she viewed accurately the apartments and their furniture; expressed herself much pleased with them, and spoke before she went of visiting them hereafter.

I wrote a few days since to Margaret Perowne,³ to tell her that as she had left me suddenly and alarmed me much by doing so, she would equally relieve me would she as suddenly return. In her answer she promised in a few weeks to visit Dereham again. To despair of seeing you more is no novelty with me, as you are sufficiently aware. When I left you at Weston I was sure that I never should. I am now equally sure of it: but though I do not expect to be an inhabitant of this place a week longer, must not conclude without telling you that were an interview possible, I should see nobody with equal satisfaction.

I was made to believe when I was at Weston that this dreadful season, decisive of my fate for

¹ Cowper has drawn a line through the following:—‘ My mind has long ceased to be subject to my will, and I despair that it will ever obey it more.’

² Lady Spencer had visited him at Weston. He had dedicated his *Odyssey* to her.

³ There is a tablet to her memory at the side of Cowper’s in East Dereham church.

ever, was even then come, and it was a persuasion that ensured the arrival of it. For the greater part of the time that I have been in this country has been spent in the same hopeless manner, every day, and often every hour, being made to seem the last.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

Sunday, July 29, 1798.

DEAR SIR,—Few letters have passed between us, and I was never so incapable of writing as now, nor ever so destitute of a subject. It is long since I received your last, to which I have as yet returned no answer; nor is it possible that, though I write, I should even now reply to it. It contained, I remember, many kind expressions, which would have encouraged, perhaps, and consoled any other than myself; but I was, even then, out of the reach of all such favourable impressions, and am at present less susceptible of them than at any time since I saw you last. I once little thought to see such days as these, for almost in the moment when they found me there was not a man in the world who seemed to himself to have less reason to expect them. This you know; and what can I say of myself that you do not know?

I will only add, therefore, that we are going to the seaside to-morrow, where we are to stay a fortnight; at the end of which time may I expect to find a letter from you directed to me at Dereham?—I remain, in the meantime, yours as usual,

Wm. COWPER.

Mr. Johnson is well, and desires to be kindly remembered to you.

TO LADY HESKETH

Mundesley, Oct. 13, 1798.

DEAR COUSIN,—You describe delightful scenes, but you describe them to one who, if he even saw them, could receive no delight from them—who has a faint recollection, and so faint as to be like an almost forgotten dream, that once he was susceptible of pleasure from such causes. The country that you have had in prospect has been always famed for its beauties; but the wretch who can derive no gratification from a view of nature, even under the disadvantage of her most ordinary dress, will have no eyes to admire her in any. In one day, in one moment I should rather have said, she became an *universal blank* to me, and, though from a different cause, yet with an effect as difficult to remove, as blindness itself. In this country, if there are not mountains, there are hills; if not broad and deep rivers, yet such as are sufficient to embellish a prospect; and an object still more magnificent than any river, the ocean itself, is almost immediately under the window. Why is scenery like this, I had almost said, why is the very scene, which many years since I could not contemplate without rapture, now become, at the best, an insipid wilderness to me? It neighbours nearly, and as nearly resembles the scenery of Catfield;¹ but with what different perceptions does it present me! The reason is obvious. My state of mind is a medium through which the beauties of

¹ Where Cowper spent many a holiday as a boy, and played with his cousins Ann (who became Mrs. Bodham) and Harriet, daughters of the Rev. Roger Donne.

Paradise itself could not be communicated with any effect but a painful one.

There is a wide interval between us, which it would be far easier for you than for me to pass. Yet I should in vain invite you. We shall meet no more. I know not what Mr. Johnson said of me in the long letter he addressed to you yesterday, but nothing, I am sure, that could make such an event seem probable.—I remain, as usual, dear cousin, yours,

Wm. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH

Dereham, Dec. 8, 1798.

DEAR COUSIN,—If I gave you your copy of the verses¹ you mention, I do not know how it should be imperfect; nor, if you made it yourself, how it should be so defective as to require my corrections. If any stanza, ending with the words inserted in your letter to Mr. Johnson, was omitted, it is also omitted in the copy that is here, and it is utterly impossible that I should now replace it, incapable as I am of recollecting a single stanza of the whole. The copy that is in Mr. Johnson's possession he will send to-morrow.

I give all my miserable days to the revisal of Homer, and often many hours of the night to the same hopeless employment;—hopeless on every

¹ Lady Hesketh had written to Rev. John Johnson, 1st November 1798: ‘The occasion of my writing is to know from you whether you can let me have an accurate and exact copy of our dear cousin’s sweet lines on the Queen’s coming to London to see the illuminations? [See Globe Ed. p. 370]. I have a copy, but I know it is imperfect, and as I want it for a lady who is all but crazy upon the subject, I wish it to be exact.’—*Letters of Lady Hesketh*, edited by C. B. Johnson, 1901.

account; both because myself am such while engaged in it, and because it is in vain that I bestow any labour at all upon it, on account of the unforeseen impossibility of doing justice to a poet of such great antiquity in a *modern* language, and in a species of metre far less harmonious than that of the original. That under such disabling circumstances, and in despair both of myself and of my work, I should yet attend to it, and even feel something like a wish to improve it, would be unintelligible to me, if I did not know that my volitions, and consequently my actions, are under a perpetual irresistible influence. Whatever they were in the earlier part of my life, that such they are now, is, with me, a matter of every day's experience.

This doctrine I once denied, and even now assert the truth of it respecting myself only. There can be no peace where there is no freedom; and he is a wretch indeed who is a necessitarian by experience.

Sir John Throckmorton was here this day se'n-night, much altered since I saw him last, more than I should have thought possible in so short a time, yet not so much but that I should have known him anywhere. His horse had fallen under him on his way hither, and perhaps he had received more hurt than he acknowledged, which might have some effect in the alteration of his looks that I have mentioned.

It is little worth while to return to the subject of Homer, but I will just add, that I have proceeded in the revisal as far, and somewhat farther than the fifteenth book of the *Odyssey*. — I remain, dear cousin, yours as usual,

W.M. COWPER.

On the 8th of March 1799 Cowper completed the revisal of his Homer, and then wrote the *Montes Glaciales* and translated it into English. On March 20 he composed those affecting and appalling stanzas entitled *The Castaway*, founded on an anecdote in Anson's *Voyages* about a poor fellow who was washed overboard. Cowper compared the fate of the unhappy man with his own. Each perished,

But I beneath a rougher sea,
And 'whelmed in deeper gulfs than he.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

Dereham, April 11, 1799.

DEAR SIR,—Your last letter so long unanswered may, and indeed must, have proved sufficiently that my state of mind is not now more favourable to the purpose of writing than it was when I received it; for had any alteration in that respect taken place, I should certainly have acknowledged it long since, or at whatsoever time the change had happened, and should not have waited for the present call upon me to return you my thanks at the same time for the letter and for the book which you have been so kind as to send me. Mr. Johnson has read it to me. If it afforded me any amusement, or suggested to me any reflections, they were only such as served to embitter, if possible, still more the present moment, by a sad retrospect to those days when I thought myself secure of an eternity to be spent with the spirits of such men as He whose life afforded the subject of it. But I was little aware of what I had to expect, and that a storm was at hand which in one

terrible moment would darken, and in another still more terrible blot out that prospect for ever.

Adieu, dear Sir, whom in those days I called dear friend, with feelings that justified the appellation.—
I remain, yours,

Wm. COWPER.

Cowper died on the 25th of April 1800, and was buried at East Dereham. Lady Hesketh died 15th January 1807, and was buried in Bristol Cathedral. The Rev. John Newton died 21st December 1807, and was buried at St. Mary Woolnoth's (in London), of which he had been rector twenty-eight years. In January 1888 his remains and those of his wife were removed to Olney Churchyard, and a monument was erected to their memory.



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| 35 | Sept. 3 | Mrs. Cowper | It is reckoned | Southey, iii. 279 | 76 |
| 36 | Oct. 9 | Hill | It would be rather | Southey, xv. 12 | 78 |
| 37 | Oct. 20 | Mrs. Cowper | I am very sorry | Southey, iii. 282 | 79 |
| 38 | Oct. 27 | Hill | If every dealer | Southey, xv. 13 | 82 |
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| 40 | 1767, Jan. 30 | Lady Hesketh | I am glad | Southey, i. 188 | 84 |
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| 42 | Mar. 14 | <i>Id.</i> | I just add a line | Southey, iii. 287 | 89 |
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| 57 | 1769, Jan. 21 | <i>Id.</i> | I rejoice with you | Southey, i. 211 | 105 |
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| 62 | Aug. 31 | Mrs. Cowper | A letter from | Southey, iii. 294 | 110 |
| 63 | 1770, Jan. 20 | Hill | The newspapers | Southey, xv. 24 | 111 |
| 64 | Feb. 10 | <i>Id.</i> | I wrote to | Southey, xv. 25 | 112 |
| 65 | Feb. 15 | <i>Id.</i> | I thank you | Southey, xv. 25 | 112 |
| 66 | Feb. 26 | Mrs. Unwin | The blank which | <i>Universal Review</i> , June 1890 | 113 |
| 67 | Mar. 5 | Mrs. Cowper | My brother | Grimshawe, i. 106 | 116 |
| 68 | Mar. 24 | Mrs. Madan | You may possibly | Southey, iii. 296 | 117 |
| 69 | Mar. 31 | Unwin | I am glad | S. (partially) i. 214 | 118 |
| 70 | Apr. 21 | Hill | You will oblige | Southey, xv. 26 | 121 |
| 71 | May 8 | <i>Id.</i> | Your letter | Southey, iii. 297 | 122 |
| 72 | June 7 | Mrs. Cowper | I am obliged | Southey, iii. 299 | 123 |
| 73 | Sept. 25 | Hill | I have not done | Southey, i. 240 | 126 |

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| 74 | 1771, Jan. 1 | Hill | You will receive | Southey, xv. 27 | 126 |
| 75 | Aug. 27 | <i>Id.</i> | I take a friend | Southey, i. 240 | 127 |
| 76 | 1772, Jan. 30 | <i>Id.</i> | An article | Southey, xv. 28 | 127 |
| 77 | Feb. 4 | <i>Id.</i> | I am much | Southey, xv. 28 | 128 |
| 78 | Apr. 7 | <i>Id.</i> | I am very much | Southey, xv. 29 | 128 |
| 79 | June 27 | <i>Id.</i> | I only write | Southey, i. 240 | 129 |
| 80 | July 2 | <i>Id.</i> | My obligations | Southey, i. 240 | 130 |
| 81 | Nov. 5 | <i>Id.</i> | You will certainly | Southey, xv. 30 | 130 |
| 82 | Nov. 14 | <i>Id.</i> | I received | Southey, xv. 31 | 131 |

Cowper's third derangement. Gap of three and a half years.

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| 83 | 1776, May 18 | Hill | You have my | Southey, xv. 32 | 135 |
| 84 | May 26 | <i>Id.</i> | More thanks | Southey, xv. 33 | 136 |
| 85 | July 6 | <i>Id.</i> | As you have | Southey, xv. 34 | 137 |
| 86 | Aug. 1 | <i>Id.</i> | The coldness | Southey, xv. 34 | 138 |
| 87 | Nov. 12 | <i>Id.</i> | The very agreeable | Southey, xv. 35 | 138 |
| 88 | Dec. 10 | <i>Id.</i> | Received two notes | Southey, xv. 36 | 139 |
| 89 | 1777, Jan. 5 | <i>Id.</i> | I am much obliged | Southey, xv. 37 | 140 |
| 90 | Mar. 30 | <i>Id.</i> | Though you | Southey, xv. 37 | 140 |
| 91 | Apr. 20 | <i>Id.</i> | Thanks for a turbot | Southey, xv. 38 | 141 |
| 92 | May 25 | <i>Id.</i> | We differ not | Southey, xv. 39 | 141 |
| 93 | July 13 | <i>Id.</i> | You need not | Southey, xv. 39 | 142 |
| 94 | Oct. 23 | <i>Id.</i> | If a melon | Southey, xv. 40 | 143 |
| 95 | Oct. 28 | <i>Id.</i> | As Lrd. Dartmouth | Southey, xv. 40 | 143 |
| 96 | Dec. 11 | <i>Id.</i> | If I begin | Southey, xv. 41 | 144 |
| 97 | 1778, Jan. 1 | <i>Id.</i> | Your last packet | Southey, xv. 42 | 145 |
| 98 | Apr. 11 | <i>Id.</i> | Poor Sir Thomas | Southey, xv. 43 | 146 |
| 99 | May 7 | <i>Id.</i> | I have been in | Southey, xv. 44 | 146 |
| 100 | June 18 | <i>Id.</i> | I truly rejoice | Southey, xv. 44 | 147 |
| 101 | June 18 | Unwin | I feel myself | Unpublished | 148 |
| 102 | July 18 | <i>Id.</i> | I hurry you | Southey, iii. 301 | 149 |
| 103 | Dec. 3 | <i>Id.</i> | I was last night | Southey, iii. 302 | 150 |
| 104 | 1779, Apr. 11 | <i>Id.</i> | When you favoured | Southey, xv. 45 | 152 |
| 105 | May 1 | <i>Id.</i> | Not having the | Unpublished | 153 |
| 106 | May 26 | <i>Id.</i> | I must beg | Southey, iii. 304 | 153 |
| 107 | July | <i>Id.</i> | If you please | Southey, iii. 305 | 154 |
| 108 | July 17 | <i>Id.</i> | We envy you | S. iii. 307 (partially) | 156 |
| 109 | Aug. 17 | <i>Id.</i> | You will not | Southey, iii. 309 | 158 |
| 110 | Sept. 21 | <i>Id.</i> | <i>Amico mio</i> | S. iii. 311 (partially) | 161 |
| 111 | Oct. 2 | Hill | You begin to count | Southey, xv. 46 | 162 |
| 112 | Oct. 31 | Unwin | I wrote my last | S. iii. 313 (partially) | 163 |
| 113 | Nov. 14 | Hill | Your approbation | Southey, xv. 47 | 165 |
| 114 | Dec. 2 | Unwin | How quick is | S. iii. 315 (partially) | 166 |
| 115 | 1780, Feb. 13 | <i>Id.</i> | The last of | S. iii. 317 (partially) | 168 |
| 116 | Feb. 27 | <i>Id.</i> | As you are pleased | S. iii. 319 (partially) | 171 |
| 117 | Mar. 4 | Mrs. Newton | To communicate | Southey, xv. 47 | 173 |
| 118 | Mar. 16 | Hill | If I had | Southey, xv. 50 | 176 |
| 119 | Mar. 18 | Newton | I am obliged | Southey, iii. 322 | 178 |
| 120 | Mar. 28 | Unwin | I have heard | S. iv. 1 (partially) | 179 |
| 121 | Apr. 6 | <i>Id.</i> | I never was | Southey, iv. 3 | 181 |
| 122 | Apr. 16 | Newton | Since I wrote | Southey, iv. 5 | 183 |

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| 124 | May 6 | Hill | I am much obliged | Southey, iv. 8 | 186 |
| 125 | May 8 | Unwin | I would advise | S. iv. 9 (partially) | 187 |
| 126 | May 10 | Mrs. Cowper | I do not write | Southey, iv. 12 | 190 |
| 127 | May 10 | Newton | If authors | Southey iv. 13 | 191 |
| 128 | June 5 | Mrs. Newton | When I write | S. xv. 52 (partially) | 194 |
| 129 | June 8 | Unwin | It is possible | Southey, iv. 14 | 196 |
| 130 | June 12 | Newton | We accept | Southey, iv. 17 | 199 |
| 131 | June 18 | Unwin | The affairs | Southey, iv. 19 | 200 |
| 132 | June 22 | <i>Id.</i> | A word or two | S. iv. 21 (partially) | 203 |
| 133 | June 23 | Newton | Your reflections | Southey, iv. 23 | 204 |
| 134 | July 2 | Unwin | <i>Carissime</i> | Southey, iv. 25 | 207 |
| 135 | July 3 | Hill | By this time | Southey, xv. 54 | 209 |
| 136 | July 8 | <i>Id.</i> | If you ever | Southey, iv. 27 | 209 |
| 137 | July 11 | Unwin | I have no | S. iv. 28 (partially) | 211 |
| 138 | July 12 | Newton | Such nights | Southey, xv. 54 | 214 |
| 139 | July 20 | Mrs. Cowper | Mr. Newton | Southey, iv. 32 | 216 |
| 140 | July 27 | Unwin | As two men | S. iv. 33 (partially) | 218 |
| 141 | July 30 | Newton | You may think | Southey, iv. 35 | 220 |
| 142 | Aug. 6 | Unwin | You like to hear | Southey, iv. 36 | 221 |
| 143 | Aug. 10 | Hill | I greet you | Southey, xv. 57 | 223 |
| 144 | Aug. 21 | Newton | The following | Southey, iv. 38 | 224 |
| 145 | Aug. 31 | Mrs. Cowper | I am obliged | Southey, iv. 40 | 226 |
| 146 | Aug. | Newton | If the heat | Southey, v. 73 | 229 |
| 147 | Sept. 31 | <i>Id.</i> | The curate | Southey, vii. 262 | 231 |
| 148 | Sept. 3 | Unwin | I am glad | S. iv. 42 (partially) | 232 |
| 149 | Sept. 7 | <i>Id.</i> | As many gentlemen | S. iv. 44 (partially) | 234 |
| 150 | Sept. 17 | <i>Id.</i> | You desire | S. iv. 46 (partially) | 237 |
| 151 | Oct. 5 | <i>Id.</i> | Now for the sequel | S. iv. 48 (partially) | 239 |
| 152 | Oct. 5 | Mrs. Newton | When a lady | Southey, iv. 52 | 243 |
| 153 | Nov. 9 | Unwin | I wrote the | Southey, iv. 53 | 243 |
| 154 | Nov. | Hill | I thank you | Southey, xv. 61 | 245 |
| 155 | Dec. 10 | <i>Id.</i> | I am sorry | Southey, xv. 58 | 246 |
| 156 | Dec. 21 | Newton | I thank you | Southey, xv. 59 | 247 |
| 157 | Dec. 24 | Unwin | I am sensibly | Southey, iv. 54 | 249 |
| 158 | Dec. 25 | Hill | Weary with rather | Southey, iv. 58 | 252 |
| 159 | Dec. | Unwin | Poetical Reports | S. iv. 59 (partially) | 253 |
| 160 | 1781, Jan. 14 | <i>Id.</i> | I seldom write | Southey, iv. 60 | 255 |
| 161 | Jan. 21 | Newton | I am glad | Southey, xv. 63 | 258 |
| 162 | Feb. 3 | Hill | It is possible | Southey, xv. 65 | 260 |
| 163 | Feb. 4 | Newton | We have waited | Southey, iv. 63 | 261 |
| 164 | Feb. 6 | Unwin | It is high | S. iv. 66 (partially) | 264 |
| 165 | Feb. 15 | Hill | I am glad | Southey, iv. 69 | 268 |
| 166 | Feb. 18 | Newton | I send you | Southey, iv. 70 | 269 |
| 167 | Feb. 19 | Mrs. Hill | When a man | Southey, xv. 66 | 272 |
| 168 | Feb. 25 | Newton | He that tells | Southey, xv. 68 | 274 |
| 169 | Feb. 27 | Unwin | In the first | S. iv. 74 (partially) | 277 |
| 170 | Mar. 5 | Newton | Since writing | S. xv. 72 (partially) | 280 |
| 171 | Mar. 18 | <i>Id.</i> | A slight disorder | Southey, xv. 75 | 283 |
| 172 | Apr. 2 | Unwin | Fine weather | S. iv. 76 (partially) | 286 |
| 173 | Apr. 8 | Newton | Since I commenced | Southey, iv. 79 | 289 |
| 174 | Apr. 23 | <i>Id.</i> | Having not | Southey, iv. 81 | 291 |
| 175 | Apr. 25 | <i>Id.</i> | While I thought | Southey, iv. 85 | 295 |

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| 177 | May 9 | Hill | I am in | Southey, iv. 89 | 299 |
| 178 | May 10 | Unwin | It is Friday | Gr. i. 248 (partially) | 300 |
| 179 | May 13 | Newton | We thank you | Southey, iv. 90 | 303 |
| 180 | May 21 | <i>Id.</i> | I am not | Southey, iv. 93 | 305 |
| 181 | May 23 | Unwin | If a writer's | S. iv. 95 (partially) | 307 |
| 182 | May 28 | <i>Id.</i> | I believe | S. iv. 101 (partially) | 313 |
| 183 | May 28 | Newton | I am much | Southey, iv. 102 | 314 |
| 184 | June 5 | Unwin | If the old | S. iv. 104 (partially) | 316 |
| 185 | June 24 | <i>Id.</i> | The letter | S. iv. 107 (partially) | 319 |
| 186 | June (?) | <i>Id.</i> | William for the | Unpublished | 323 |
| 187 | July 7 | Newton | Mr. Old | Southey, xv. 78 | 325 |
| 188 | July 12 | <i>Id.</i> | I am going | Southey, iv. 111 | 328 |
| 189 | July 22 | <i>Id.</i> | I am sensible | Southey, iv. 113 | 330 |
| 190 | July 29 | Unwin | Having given | S. iv. 116 (partially) | 333 |
| 191 | Aug. 1 | Mrs. Newton | Though much | Southey, iv. 119 | 336 |
| 192 | Aug. 16 | Newton | I might date | Southey, xv. 81 | 339 |
| 193 | Aug. 21 | <i>Id.</i> | You wish you | Southey, xv. 84 | 342 |
| 194 | Aug. 25 | <i>Id.</i> | By Johnson's | Southey, iv. 122 | 345 |
| 195 | Aug. 25 | Unwin | We rejoice | S. iv. 124 (partially) | 348 |
| 196 | Sept. 9 | Newton | I am not | S. xv. 87 (partially) | 350 |
| 197 | Sept. 16 | Mrs. Newton | A noble theme | Southey, xv. 89 | 353 |
| 198 | Sept. 16 | Johnson (book-seller) | By your not | Southey, xv. 90 | 354 |
| 199 | Sept. 18 | Newton | I return | Southey, xv. 91 | 355 |
| 200 | Sept. 26 | Unwin | I may | S. iv. 127 (partially) | 357 |
| 201 | Oct. 1 | Johnson (book-seller) | I expect | Southey, xv. 94 | 359 |
| 202 | Oct. 3 | Hill | Your draft | Southey, xv. 94 | 360 |
| 203 | Oct. 4 | Newton | I generally | Southey, iv. 129 | 361 |
| 204 | Oct. 6 | Unwin | What a world | S. iv. 131 (partially) | 363 |
| 205 | Oct. 14 | Newton | I would not | Southey, xv. 95 | 365 |
| 206 | Oct. 19 | Mrs. Cowper | Your fear | Southey, iv. 133 | 367 |
| 207 | Oct. 20 | Johnson (book-seller) | I acknowledge | Southey, xv. 98 | 370 |
| 208 | Oct. 22 | Newton | Mr. Bates | Southey, xv. 99 | 370 |
| 209 | Nov. 5 | Unwin | I give you joy | S. iv. 135 (partially) | 373 |
| 210 | Nov. 7 | Newton | So far as | Southey, iv. 138 | 376 |
| 211 | Nov. 19 | <i>Id.</i> | I really think | Southey, iv. 142 | 379 |
| 212 | Nov. 24 | Unwin | News is always | S. iv. 146 (partially) | 384 |
| 213 | Nov. 26 | <i>Id.</i> | I wrote to | S. iv. 149 (partially) | 387 |
| 214 | (?) | (?) | In a time | Unpublished | 390 |
| 215 | Nov. 27 | Newton | First Mr. Wilson | Southey, iv. 154 | 391 |
| 216 | Nov. 27 | Johnson (book-seller) | You will oblige me | Southey, xv. 101 | 394 |
| 217 | Nov. 27 | Newton | A visit from | Southey, iv. 157 | 394 |
| 218 | Nov. 30 | Hill | Though I | Southey, xv. 102 | 396 |
| 219 | Dec. 2 | <i>Id.</i> | I thank you | Southey, xv. 102 | 397 |
| 220 | Dec. 4 | Newton | The present | Southey, iv. 159 | 398 |
| 221 | Dec. 9 | Hill | Having returned | Southey, xv. 104 | 401 |
| 222 | Dec. 15 | Unwin | The salmon | S. iv. 153 (partially) | 403 |
| 223 | Dec. 17 | Lady Austen | Dear Anna | Southey, i. 303 | 406 |
| 224 | (?) | Johnson (book-seller) | I always | Southey, xv. 110 | 409 |

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| 225 | 1781, Dec. 17 | Newton | The poem | Southey, xv. 106 | 410 |
| 226 | Dec. 21 | <i>Id.</i> | I might | Southey, iv. 162 | 414 |
| 227 | Dec. 31 | <i>Id.</i> | Yesterday's post | Southey, iv. 165 | 417 |
| 228 | (?) | Unwin | That the fact | Unpublished | 419 |
| 229 | (?) | <i>Id.</i> | As I promised | Unpublished | 420 |
| 230 | 1782, Jan. 5 | <i>Id.</i> | Did I allow | S. iv. 168 (partially) | 421 |
| 231 | Jan. 13 | Newton | Having just | Southey, iv. 171 | 424 |
| 232 | Jan. 17 | Unwin | I am glad | Southey, iv. 174 | 428 |
| 233 | (?) | <i>Id.</i> | The modest terms | S. iv. 203 (partially) | 432 |
| 234 | Jan. 31 | Hill | Having thanked | Southey, xv. 111 | 435 |
| 235 | Jan. 31 | Johnson (book-seller) | You will find | Southey, xv. 113 | 435 |
| 236 | Feb. 2 | Newton | Though I value | Southey, iv. 178 | 438 |
| 237 | Feb. 9 | Unwin | I thank you | Southey, iv. 181 | 441 |
| 238 | Feb. 16 | Newton | Lest the grumbling | Southey, iv. 185 | 441 |
| 239 | Feb. 24 | Unwin | If I should | S. iv. 187 (partially) | 446 |
| 240 | Feb. | Newton | It is not | Southey, iv. 190 | 449 |
| 241 | Feb. 25 | Lord Thurlow | I make no | Southey, ii. 17 | 453 |
| 242 | Mar. 6 | Newton | The tempting | Southey, iv. 194 | 454 |
| 243 | Mar. 7 | Unwin | We have great | S. iv. 197 (partially) | 457 |
| 244 | Mar. 14 | Newton | I can only | Southey, iv. 200 | 460 |
| 245 | Mar. 14 | <i>Id.</i> | As servant maids | Southey, xv. 113 | 464 |
| 246 | Mar. 18 | Unwin | Nothing has given | S. iv. 206 (partially) | 465 |
| 247 | Mar. 24 | Bull | If you had | Southey, iv. 209 | 467 |
| 248 | (?) | <i>Id.</i> | Behold the plan | Southey, iv. 210 | 468 |
| 249 | Apr. 1 | Unwin | I could not | Southey, iv. 211 | 469 |
| 250 | Apr. 1 | <i>Id.</i> | Received of Mr. Hill | Unpublished | 472 |
| 251 | Apr. 27 | Unwin | A part of Lord | Southey, iv. 214 | 474 |
| 252 | May 21 | John Thornton | You have | Unpublished | 477 |
| 253 | May 27 | Unwin | Rather ashamed | S. iv. 217 (partially) | 478 |
| 254 | June 12 | <i>Id.</i> | Every extraordinary | Southey, iv. 220 | 482 |
| 255 | June | <i>Id.</i> | I am glad | Southey, iv. 224 | 486 |
| 256 | June 22 | <i>Id.</i> | If reading verse | Southey, x. 59 | 487 |
| 257 | July 3 | Unwin | We took leave | Southey, v. 54 | 489 |
| 258 | July 16 | <i>Id.</i> | Though some people | Southey, iv. 225 | 493 |

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| 260 | Aug. 3 | Unwin | Entertaining some | S. iv. 229 (partially) | 2 |
| 261 | Aug. 12 | Lady Austen | To watch | Southey, iv. 232 | 6 |
| 262 | Aug. 14 | Bull | The letter | Southey, iv. 234 | 8 |
| 263 | Aug. 27 | Unwin | The last four | Southey, v. 59 | 8 |
| 264 | Sept. 6 | Hill | Yesterday | Southey, xv. 115 | 12 |
| 265 | Oct. 27 | Bull | Mon amiable | Southey, iv. 234 | 13 |
| 266 | Nov. 4 | Unwin | You are | S. iv. 236 (partially) | 15 |

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| 268 | (?) | Unwin | Dr. Beattie | S. iv. 245 (partially) | 19 |
| 269 | Nov. 11 | Hill | Your shocking | Southe, xv. 116 | 21 |
| 270 | Nov. 12 | <i>Id.</i> | I am | Southe, xv. 118 | 23 |
| 271 | Nov. 18 | Unwin | On the part | S. iv. 240 (partially) | 25 |
| 272 | Nov. 23 | Mrs. Newton | The soles | Southe, xv. 120 | 27 |
| 273 | Nov. 30 | Unwin | Since such | Southe, iv. 242 | 30 |
| 274 | Dec. 7 | Hill | At seven | Southe, xv. 123 | 33 |
| 275 | 1783, Jan. 11 | Newton | On Thursday | Southe, iv. 246 | 34 |
| 276 | Jan. 19 | Unwin | Not to retaliate | Southe, iv. 248 | 36 |
| 277 | Jan. 26 | Newton | It is reported | Southe, xv. 124 | 38 |
| 278 | Feb. 2 | Unwin | Your journey | S. iv. 250 (partially) | 40 |
| 279 | Feb. 8 | Newton | When I contemplate | Southe, iv. 251 | 43 |
| 280 | Feb. 13 | Hill | In writing | Southe, iv. 254 | 45 |
| 281 | Feb. 20 | <i>Id.</i> | Suspecting | Southe, iv. 255 | 46 |
| 282 | (?) | <i>Id.</i> | Great Revolutions | Southe, iv. 255 | 47 |
| 283 | Feb. 24 | Newton | A weakness | Southe, iv. 256 | 48 |
| 284 | Mar. 7 | Bull | When will you | Southe, iv. 259 | 50 |
| 285 | Mar. 7 | Newton | Were my letters | Southe, iv. 260 | 52 |
| 286 | Mar. 30 | Unwin | The sturgeon | Southe, iv. 263 | 55 |
| 287 | Apr. 5 | Newton | When one has | Southe, iv. 265 | 57 |
| 288 | Apr. 20 | <i>Id.</i> | My device | S. xv. 127 (partially) | 60 |
| 289 | May 5 | <i>Id.</i> | Your letter | Southe, iv. 268 | 63 |
| 290 | May 12 | Unwin | A letter | S. iv. 270 (partially) | 65 |
| 291 | May 26 | Hill | I feel for | Southe, iv. 273 | 68 |
| 292 | May 31 | Newton | You have had | Southe, iv. 274 | 69 |
| 293 | June 3 | Bull | My greenhouse | Southe, iv. 276 | 72 |
| 294 | June 8 | Unwin | Our severest winter | S. iv. 277 (partially) | 73 |
| 295 | June 13 | Newton | I thank you | Southe, iv. 279 | 75 |
| 296 | June 17 | <i>Id.</i> | Your letter | Southe, iv. 283 | 78 |
| 297 | June 20 | Bull | This comes | Southe, iv. 286 | 81 |
| 298 | June 27 | <i>Id.</i> | A fine morning | Southe, iv. 286 | 82 |
| 299 | June 29 | Newton | The translation | Southe, iv. 287 | 83 |
| 300 | July 27 | <i>Id.</i> | You cannot | Southe, iv. 289 | 84 |
| 301 | Aug. 3 | Bull | I began | Southe, iv. 292 | 87 |
| 302 | | <i>Id.</i> | I received | Southe, iv. 294 | 89 |
| 303 | Aug. 4 | Unwin | I feel myself | S. iv. 295 (partially) | 90 |
| 304 | Sept. 7 | <i>Id.</i> | So long | S. iv. 298 (partially) | 94 |
| 305 | Sept. 8 | Newton | Mrs. Unwin | Southe, iv. 301 | 97 |
| 306 | Sept. 23 | <i>Id.</i> | We are glad | Southe, iv. 304 | 100 |
| 307 | Sept. 29 | Unwin | We are sorry | Southe, iv. 307 | 103 |
| 308 | Oct. 6 | Newton | It is indeed | Southe, iv. 310 | 107 |
| 309 | Oct. 13 | <i>Id.</i> | I am much | Southe, iv. 313 | 110 |
| 310 | Oct. 20 | Hill | I should not | Southe, iv. 317 | 113 |
| 311 | Oct. 20 | <i>Id.</i> | I have nothing | Southe, xv. 130 | 114 |
| 312 | Oct. 22 | Newton | I have made | Southe, xv. 131 | 115 |
| 313 | Nov. 3 | <i>Id.</i> | My time | Southe, ii. 47 | 117 |
| 314 | Nov. 10 | Unwin | I have lost | S. iv. 318 (partially) | 119 |
| 315 | Nov. 17 | Newton | A parcel | Southe, xv. 133 | 122 |
| 316 | Nov. 23 | Hill | Your opinion | Southe, xv. 136 | 126 |
| 317 | Nov. 24 | Unwin | An evening | Southe, iv. 321 | 127 |
| 318 | Nov. 30 | Newton | I have neither | Southe, xv. 138 | 130 |
| 319 | Dec. 15 | <i>Id.</i> | I know not | Southe, xv. 140 | 132 |

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| 1784, Jan. 3 | Unwin | Your silence | S. iv. 327 (partially) | 139 |
| Jan. 5 | Mrs. Hill | You will readily | Southey, xv. 147 | 143 |
| Jan. 8 | Hill | I wish you | Southey, xv. 149 | 144 |
| Jan. 13 | Newton | I too have | Southey, iv. 330 | 145 |
| Jan. 22 | Unwin | When I first | S. iv. 333 (partially) | 148 |
| Jan. 25 | Newton | This contention | Southey, iv. 337 | 153 |
| Feb. | <i>Id.</i> | I am glad | Southey, iv. 339 | 155 |
| Feb. 10 | <i>Id.</i> | This morning | Southey, iv. 341 | 157 |
| Feb. 19 | Johnson (book-seller) | If you have | Southey, xv. 150 | 160 |
| Feb. 22 | Bull | I congratulate | Southey, iv. 344 | 160 |
| Feb. | Newton | I give you | Southey, iv. 346 | 161 |
| Feb. 29 | Unwin | I have no | S. iv. 349 (partially) | 165 |
| Mar. 8 | Newton | By this time | Southey, v. 1 | 167 |
| Mar. 11 | <i>Id.</i> | I little thought | Southey, v. 4 | 171 |
| Mar. 19 | <i>Id.</i> | I wish it | Southey, v. 8 | 175 |
| Mar. 21 | Unwin | I thank you | S. v. 12 (partially) | 178 |
| Mar. 29 | Newton | It being his | Southey, v. 15 | 181 |
| Apr. | <i>Id.</i> | Having been | Southey, v. 18 | 185 |
| Apr. 5 | Unwin | The hat | S. v. 21 (partially) | 188 |
| Apr. 25 | <i>Id.</i> | I wish | S. v. 24 (partially) | 191 |
| Apr. 26 | Newton | We are truly | Southey, v. 27 | 194 |
| May 3 | Unwin | The subject | S. v. 31 (partially) | 198 |
| May 8 | <i>Id.</i> | When our | Southey, v. 35 | 202 |
| May 10 | Newton | We rejoice | Southey, xv. 150 | 205 |
| May 22 | <i>Id.</i> | I am glad | Southey, v. 37 | 206 |
| May 24 | Unwin | It is hard | Southey, iv. 323 | 210 |
| June 5 | Newton | When you | Southey, v. 41 | 213 |
| June 21 | <i>Id.</i> | We are much | Southey, xv. 151 | 213 |
| June 25 | Rev. M. Powley | I have read | Southey, v. 41 | 215 |
| July 3 | Unwin | I was sorry | Southey, v. 45 | 219 |
| July 5 | Newton | A dearth | Southey, v. 48 | 222 |
| July 12 | Unwin | Your sister | S. v. 51 (partially) | 225 |
| July 19 | Newton | Notwithstanding | Southey, v. 62 | 229 |
| July 28 | <i>Id.</i> | I may perhaps | Southey, v. 65 | 232 |
| Aug. 14 | Unwin | I give you | S. v. 68 (partially) | 234 |
| Aug. 16 | Newton | Had you | Southey, v. 70 | 237 |
| Sept. 11 | Unwin | I am obliged | Southey, v. 74 | 239 |
| Sept. 11 | Hill | I have never | Southey, v. 77 | 242 |
| Sept. 18 | Newton | Following your | Southey, v. 77 | 243 |
| Oct. 2 | Unwin | A poet can | Southey, v. 80 | 244 |
| Oct. 9 | Newton | The pains | Southey, v. 82 | 247 |
| Oct. 10 | Unwin | I send you | S. v. 86 (partially) | 251 |
| Oct. 20 | <i>Id.</i> | Your letter | S. v. 88 (partially) | 253 |
| Oct. 30 | Newton | I accede | Southey, v. 93 | 258 |
| Nov. 1 | Unwin | Were I to | S. v. 95 (partially) | 261 |
| Nov. 8 | Bull | The Task | Southey, v. 98 | 264 |
| Nov. | <i>Id.</i> | Dear Joseph | Southey, ix. 268 | 265 |
| Nov. 20 | Unwin | To condole | Southey, v. 99 | 267 |
| Nov. 27 | Newton | The <i>Zirocinium</i> | Southey, v. 100 | 269 |
| Nov. | Unwin | All the interest | Southey, v. 103 | 271 |
| | | The slice | S. v. 106 (partially) | 274 |

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| 372 | 1784, Nov. 29 | Unwin | I am happy | Southey, v. 108 | 276 |
| 373 | Dec. 4 | Hill | You have my | Southey, xv. 153 | 279 |
| 374 | Dec. 13 | Newton | Having invited | Southey, v. 110 | 280 |
| 375 | Dec. 18 | Unwin | I condole with | S. v. 113 (partially) | 283 |
| 376 | | Johnson (book-seller) | I did not write | ? | 280 |
| 377 | Dec. 24 | Newton | I am neither | Southey, v. 116 | 287 |
| 378 | 1785, Jan. 5 | <i>Id.</i> | I have observed | Southey, xv. 154 | 289 |
| 379 | Jan. 15 | Unwin | Your letters | S. v. 118 (partially) | 290 |
| 380 | Jan. 22 | Hill | The departure | Southey, xv. 156 | 293 |
| 381 | Feb. 7 | Unwin | Your letter | S. v. 120 (partially) | 294 |
| 382 | Feb. 19 | Newton | I am obliged | Southey, xv. 157 | 297 |
| 383 | Feb. 27 | Hill | I write merely | Southey, xv. 161 | 301 |
| 384 | Feb. 28 | Unwin | Permit me | Southey, v. 123 | 302 |
| 385 | Mar. 19 | Newton | You will wonder | Southey, xv. 162 | 305 |
| 386 | Mar. 20 | Unwin | I thank you | S. v. 126 (partially) | 309 |
| 387 | Apr. 9 | Newton | In a letter | Southey, xv. 166 | 312 |
| 388 | Apr. 22 | <i>Id.</i> | When I received | Southey, v. 129 | 314 |
| 389 | Apr. 30 | Unwin | I return | S. v. 131 (partially) | 316 |
| 390 | May | Newton | I do not know | Southey, xv. 168 | 319 |
| 391 | June 4 | <i>Id.</i> | Thanks for | Southey, v. 134 | 323 |
| 392 | June 12 | Unwin | It was at | Southey, v. 138 | 327 |
| 393 | June 13 | Bull | Your note | Southey, v. 140 | 329 |
| 394 | June 25 | Hill | I write | Southey, v. 141 | 330 |
| 395 | June 25 | Newton | A note | Southey, xv. 172 | 331 |
| 396 | July 9 | <i>Id.</i> | You wrong | Southey, xv. 176 | 335 |
| 397 | July 27 | Unwin | You and your | S. v. 143 (partially) | 338 |
| 398 | Aug. 6 | Newton | I found | Southey, v. 146 | 343 |
| 399 | Aug. 27 | <i>Id.</i> | I did | Southey, v. 151 | 348 |
| 400 | Aug. 27 | Unwin | I was | S. v. 156 (partially) | 352 |
| 401 | Sept. 24 | Newton | I am | Southey, v. 159 | 356 |
| 402 | Oct. 11 | Hill | You began | Southey, xv. 179 | 360 |
| 403 | Oct. 12 | Lady Hesketh | It is no | Southey, ii. 101 | 361 |
| 404 | Oct. 16 | Newton | To have | Southey, v. 163 | 365 |
| 405 | Oct. 22 | Unwin | You might | Southey, v. 167 | 368 |
| 406 | ? | Lady Hesketh | I am glad | Southey, v. 170 | 372 |
| 407 | Nov. 5 | Newton | Were it | Southey, v. 171 | 373 |
| 408 | Nov. 7 | Hill | Your time | Southey, xv. 181 | 378 |
| 409 | Nov. 9 | Lady Hesketh | Whose last | Southey, ii. 105 | 378 |
| 410 | Nov. 9 | Rev. W. Bagot | You desired | Southey, v. 176 | 381 |
| 411 | Nov. 23 | Lady Hesketh | I am | Southey, v. 176 | 382 |
| 412 | Nov. 28 | Unwin | In the first | Southey, v. 181 | 386 |
| 413 | Nov. 30 | Lady Hesketh | Your kindness | Southey, v. 182 | 388 |
| 414 | Dec. 3 | Newton | I am glad | Southey, v. 187 | 392 |
| 415 | Dec. 6 | Lady Hesketh | I write | Southey, v. 191 | 396 |
| 416 | Dec. 7 | <i>Id.</i> | At this | Southey, v. 194 | 399 |
| 417 | Dec. 10 | Newton | What you | Southey, xv. 181 | 404 |
| 418 | Dec. 15 | Lady Hesketh | My desk | Southey, v. 199 | 406 |
| 419 | ? | <i>Id.</i> | The long | Southey, v. 205 | 412 |
| 420 | Dec. 24 | Unwin | You would | S. v. 207 (partially) | 415 |
| 421 | Dec. 24 | Hill | Till I | Southey, v. 209 | 417 |
| 422 | Dec. 27 | Colman | For though | Southey, ii. 203 | 418 |
| 423 | Dec. 31 | Unwin | You have | S. v. 210 (partially) | 419 |

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| 424 | 1785, ? | Rev. M. Powley | You judge | Southey, v. 213 | 423 |
| 425 | ? | Lady Hesketh | I have | Southey, v. 215 | 425 |
| 426 | 1786, Jan. 2 | <i>Id.</i> | Be under | Southey, v. 217 | 427 |
| 427 | Jan. 7 | Bull | <i>Charissime</i> | Unpublished | 432 |
| 428 | Jan. 10 | Lady Hesketh | It gave | Southey, v. 222 | 433 |
| 429 | Jan. 14 | Unwin | I never | S. v. 225 (partially) | 435 |
| 430 | Jan. 14 | Newton | You never | Southey, v. 227 | 437 |
| 431 | Jan. 15 | Rev. W. Bagot | I have | Southey, v. 229 | 439 |
| 432 | Jan. 16 | Lady Hesketh | I have sent | Southey, v. 231 | 441 |
| 433 | Jan. 23 | <i>Id.</i> | Anonymous | Southey, v. 239 | 449 |
| 434 | Jan. 23 | Rev. W. Bagot | The paragraph | Southey, v. 245 | 456 |
| 435 | Jan. 31 | Lady Hesketh | It is very | Southey, v. 246 | 457 |
| 436 | Feb. 9 | <i>Id.</i> | I have . | Southey, v. 250 | 460 |
| 437 | Feb. 11 | <i>Id.</i> | It must | Southey, v. 252 | 462 |
| 438 | Feb. 18 | Newton | I feel | Southey, v. 255 | 465 |
| 439 | Feb. 19 | Lady Hesketh | Since so | Southey, v. 258 | 468 |
| 440 | Feb. 27 | Rev. W. Bagot | Alas ! | Southey, v. 261 | 471 |
| 441 | Feb. 27 | Lady Hesketh | As I sat | Southey, v. 262 | 472 |
| 442 | Mar. 5 | Johnson (book-seller) | I ought | Southey, xv. 184 | 478 |
| 443 | Mar. 6 | Lady Hesketh | Your opinion | Southey, v. 268 | 479 |
| 444 | Mar. 8 | Johnson (book-seller) | You are | Southey, xv. 185 | 482 |
| 445 | Mar. 13 | Unwin | I seem | S. v. 271 (partially) | 484 |
| 446 | Mar. 20 | Lady Hesketh | Those mornings | Southey, v. 272 | 485 |
| 447 | Mar. 29 | <i>Id.</i> | Animated | Southey, v. 277 | 490 |

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| 448 | 1786, Apr. 1 | Newton | I have | Southey, v. 282 | 1 |
| 449 | Apr. 3 | Lady Hesketh | Have you | Southey, v. 284 | 3 |
| 450 | Apr. 5 | Hill | I did | Grimshawe, iii. 141 | 10 |
| 451 | Apr. 10 | Lady Hesketh | That's my | Southey, v. 291 | 10 |
| 452 | Apr. 17 | <i>Id.</i> | If you | Southey, v. 298 | 17 |
| 453 | Apr. 24 | <i>Id.</i> | Your letters | Southey, v. 301 | 21 |
| 454 | May 1 | <i>Id.</i> | You need | Southey, v. 304 | 23 |
| 455 | May 8 | <i>Id.</i> | I did | Southey, v. 309 | 28 |
| 456 | May 15 | <i>Id.</i> | From this | Southey, v. 314 | 33 |
| 457 | May 20 | Rev. W. Bagot | About three | Southey, v. 318 | 37 |
| 458 | May 20 | Newton | Within | Southey, ii. 216 | 40 |
| 459 | May 25 | Lady Hesketh | I have | Southey, v. 321 | 43 |
| 460 | May 29 | <i>Id.</i> | Thou dear | Southey, v. 325 | 47 |
| 461 | June 4 | <i>Id.</i> | Ah ! my cousin | Southey, v. 327 | 50 |
| 462 | June 9 | Hill | The little | Southey, v. 330 | 53 |
| 463 | June 12 | Lady Hesketh | I am | Southey, v. 332 | 54 |
| 464 | June 19 | Hill | My dear | Southey, v. 338 | 61 |

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| 465 | 1786, July 3 | Unwin | After a long | Southey, v. 339 | 61 |
| 466 | July 4 | Rev. W. Bagot | I rejoice | Southey, v. 343 | 63 |
| 467 | July | Newton | I am not | Southey, v. 345 | 68 |
| 468 | July 10 | Unwin | Having risen | Unpublished | 70 |
| 469 | Aug. 5 | Newton | I am neither | Southey, v. 348 | 73 |
| 470 | Aug. 9 | Unwin | I scratch | S. v. 351 (partially) | 76 |
| 471 | Aug. 24 | <i>Id.</i> | I catch | Southey, v. 353 | 78 |
| 472 | (?) | <i>Id.</i> | You are my | Southey, v. 355 | 80 |
| 473 | (?) | <i>Id.</i> | You are | Southey, vi. 1 | 81 |
| 474 | (?) | <i>Id.</i> | I am | Southey, vi. 4 | 84 |
| 475 | (?) | <i>Id.</i> | I write | Southey, vi. 6 | 86 |
| 476 | (?) | <i>Id.</i> | As I | Southey, vi. 8 | 88 |
| 477 | (?) | <i>Id.</i> | How apt | Southey, vi. 9 | 89 |
| 478 | Aug. 31 | Rev. W. Bagot | I began | Southey, vi. 12 | 91 |
| 479 | Sept. 2 | Johnson (book-seller) | I enclose | Southey, xv. 186 | 94 |
| 480 | Sept. 24 | Unwin | So interesting | Southey, vi. 14 | 95 |
| 481 | Sept. 30 | Newton | No length | Southey, ii. 258 | 98 |
| 482 | (?) | <i>Id.</i> | The fish | S. vi. 17 (partially) | 101 |
| 483 | Oct. 6 | Hill | You have | Southey, vi. 18 | 102 |

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| | | | | | |
|-----|--------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-----|
| 484 | Nov. 17 | Rev. W. Bagot | There are | Grimshawe, iii. 222 | 103 |
| 485 | Nov. 17 | Newton | My usual | Southey, vi. 19 | 105 |
| 486 | Nov. 26 | Lady Hesketh | It is my birthday | Southey, vi. 22 | 107 |
| 487 | Dec. 4 | <i>Id.</i> | It distresses | Southey, vi. 24 | 109 |
| 488 | Dec. 4 | <i>Id.</i> | I sent you | Southey, vi. 28 | 114 |
| 489 | Dec. 9 | Robert Smith | We have indeed | Southey, vi. 30 | 116 |
| 490 | Dec. 9 | Lady Hesketh | I am perfectly | Southey, vi. 33 | 118 |
| 491 | Dec. 9 | Hill | We had just | Southey, vi. 34 | 119 |
| 492 | Dec. 11 | Lady Hesketh | Shenstone | Southey, vi. 35 | 120 |
| 493 | Dec. 13 | W. Churchev | I return | Southey, xv. 188 | 124 |
| 494 | Dec. 16 | Rev. J. Newton | The death | Southey, vi. 39 | 126 |
| 495 | Dec. 21 | Lady Hesketh | Your welcome | Southey, vi. 42 | 128 |
| 496 | Dec. 24 | <i>Id.</i> | You must | Southey, vi. 43 | 130 |
| 497 | 1787, Jan. 3 | Rev. W. Bagot | You wish | Southey, vi. 48 | 135 |
| 498 | Jan. 8 | Lady Hesketh | I have had | Southey, vi. 50 | 137 |
| 499 | Jan. 13 | Newton | It gave me | Southey, xv. 190 | 138 |
| 500 | Jan. 14 | Lady Hesketh | I have been | S. vi. 51 (partially) | 141 |

Cowper's fourth derangement. Gap of six months.

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| 501 | July 24 | Rose | This is | Southey, vi. 54 | 145 |
| 502 | Aug. 27 | <i>Id.</i> | I have not | Southey, vi. 55 | 146 |
| 503 | Aug. 30 | Lady Hesketh | Though it | Southey, vi. 57 | 148 |
| 504 | Sept. 4 | <i>Id.</i> | Come when | Southey, vi. 59 | 150 |
| 505 | Sept. 8 | <i>Id.</i> | I continue | Southey, vi. 60 | 151 |
| 506 | Sept. 15 | <i>Id.</i> | The partridges | S. vi. 63 (partially) | 154 |
| 507 | Sept. 20 | <i>Id.</i> | For the more | Southey, vi. 64 | 156 |
| 508 | Sept. 22 | Rev. W. Bagot | Not well | Southey, xv. 192 | 159 |
| 509 | Sept. 29 | Lady Hesketh | I thank you | Southey, vi. 67 | 160 |
| 510 | Oct. 2 | Newton | After a long | Southey, xv. 193 | 162 |

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| 511 | 1787, Oct. 5 | Lady Hesketh | My uncle's | Southey, vi. 68 | 164 |
| 512 | Oct. 19 | Rose | A summons | Southey, vi. 71 | 167 |
| 513 | Oct. 20 | Newton | My indisposition | Southey, vi. 72 | 168 |
| 514 | Oct. 27 | Lady Hesketh | Now that | Southey, vi. 75 | 171 |
| 515 | Nov. 3 | <i>Id.</i> | Suffer not | Southey, vi. 78 | 173 |
| 516 | Nov. 10 | <i>Id.</i> | The parliament | S. vi. 81 (partially) | 176 |
| 517 | Nov. 16 | Hill | I thank | Southey, vi. 82 | 179 |
| 518 | Nov. 17 | Lady Hesketh | We are | Southey, vi. 83 | 180 |
| 519 | Nov. 27 | <i>Id.</i> | It is the part | Southey, vi. 85 | 182 |
| 520 | Dec. 4 | <i>Id.</i> | I am glad | Southey, vi. 88 | 185 |
| 521 | Dec. 6 | Rev. W. Bagot | A short time | Southey, vi. 89 | 186 |
| 522 | Dec. 10 | Lady Hesketh | I thank you | Southey, vi. 91 | 188 |
| 523 | Dec. 13 | Rose | Unless | Southey, vi. 93 | 190 |
| 524 | Dec. 19 | Lady Hesketh | Saturday | Southey, vi. 95 | 192 |
| 525 | Dec. 24 | <i>Id.</i> | The Throcks | Southey, vi. 98 | 195 |
| 526 | 1788, Jan. 1 | <i>Id.</i> | Mrs. Unwin was | S. vi. 102 (partially) | 199 |
| 527 | Jan. 5 | Rev. W. Bagot | I thank | Southey, vi. 104 | 202 |
| 528 | Jan. 9 | Lady Hesketh | It has | Southey, vi. 106 | 204 |
| 529 | Jan. 19 | <i>Id.</i> | When I | S. vi. 109 (partially) | 207 |
| 530 | Jan. 21 | Newton | Your last | Southey, vi. 112 | 211 |
| 531 | Jan. 30 | Lady Hesketh | It is a | S. vi. 115 (partially) | 214 |
| 532 | Feb. 1 | <i>Id.</i> | Pardon me | Southey, vi. 116 | 216 |
| 533 | Feb. 7 | <i>Id.</i> | Thanks | Southey, vi. 118 | 217 |
| 534 | Feb. 12 | Mrs. King | A letter | Southey, vi. 122 | 221 |
| 535 | Feb. 14 | Rose | Though it | Southey, vi. 124 | 223 |
| 536 | Feb. 16 | Lady Hesketh | I have now | Southey, vi. 126 | 226 |
| 537 | Feb. 19 | Newton | I have much | Southey, vi. 128 | 228 |
| 538 | Feb. 21 | Clot. Rowley | I have not | Southey, ii. 284 | 231 |
| 539 | Feb. 22 | Lady Hesketh | I do not | Southey, vi. 132 | 235 |
| 540 | Mar. 1 | Newton | That my | Southey, xv. 195 | 237 |
| 541 | Mar. 3 | <i>Id.</i> | I had not | Southey, xv. 196 | 238 |
| 542 | Mar. 3 | Lady Hesketh | One day | Southey, vi. 134 | 239 |
| 543 | Mar. 3 | Mrs. King | I owe | Southey, vi. 136 | 241 |
| 544 | Mar. 12 | Lady Hesketh | Slavery | Southey, vi. 138 | 243 |
| 545 | Mar. | Gen. Cowper | A letter | Southey, vi. 140 | 245 |
| 546 | Mar. 17 | Mrs. Hill | A thousand | Southey, xv. 198 | 246 |
| 547 | Mar. 17 | Newton | The evening | Southey, xv. 199 | 247 |
| 548 | Mar. 19 | Rev. W. Bagot | The spring | Southey, vi. 141 | 248 |
| 549 | Mar. 29 | Rose | I rejoice | S. vi. 143 (partially) | 250 |
| 550 | Mar. 31 | Lady Hesketh | Mrs. Throckmorton | Southey, vi. 145 | 252 |
| 551 | Apr. 11 | Mrs. King | The melancholy | Southey, vi. 146 | 253 |
| 552 | Apr. 12 | Lady Hesketh | It is late | Unpublished | 255 |
| 553 | Apr. 14 | Gen. Cowper | Lest any | Unpublished | 257 |
| 554 | Apr. 19 | Newton | I thank you | Southey, vi. 148 | 258 |
| 555 | May 1 | Lady Hesketh | Behold | Southey, vi. 150 | 261 |
| 556 | May 6 | <i>Id.</i> | You ask | Southey, vi. 152 | 262 |
| 557 | May 8 | Hill | Alas | Southey, vi. 154 | 264 |
| 558 | May 12 | Lady Hesketh | It is probable | Southey, vi. 155 | 265 |
| 559 | May 19 | <i>Id.</i> | True as | Southey, vi. 156 | 267 |
| 560 | May 24 | Hill | For two | Southey, vi. 159 | 269 |
| 561 | May 25 | Bull | Ask | Southey, vi. 160 | 271 |
| 562 | May 27 | Lady Hesketh | The General | Southey, vi. 161 | 272 |
| 563 | June 3 | <i>Id.</i> | The excessive | Southey, vi. 163 | 273 |

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| 565 | June 8 | Hill | Your letter | Southey, vi. 164 | 277 |
| 566 | June 10 | Lady Hesketh | Your kind | Southey, ii. 303 | 278 |
| 567 | June 15 | <i>Id.</i> | Although | Southey, ii. 304 | 279 |
| 568 | June 17 | Rev. W. Bagot | You think | Southey, vi. 165 | 281 |
| 569 | June 19 | Mrs. King | You must | Southey, vi. 167 | 282 |
| 570 | June 23 | Rose | When I | Southey, vi. 169 | 285 |
| 571 | June 23 | Lady Hesketh | Mr. Newton | Unpublished | 287 |
| 572 | June 24 | Newton | I rejoice | Southey, xv. 203 | 290 |
| 573 | June 27 | Lady Hesketh | For the sake | Southey, vi. 172 | 292 |
| 574 | July 5 | <i>Id.</i> | Not emetic | Southey, vi. 174 | 294 |
| 575 | July 6 | Hill | Bitter constraint | Southey, vi. 205 | 298 |
| 576 | July 11 | Lady Hesketh | Between | Southey, vi. 177 | 298 |
| 577 | July 28 | <i>Id.</i> | It is in vain | Southey, vi. 179 | 300 |
| 578 | Aug. 9 | <i>Id.</i> | The Newtons | Southey, vi. 181 | 302 |
| 579 | Aug. 18 | Rose | I left you | Southey, vi. 182 | 303 |
| 580 | Aug. 21 | Lady Hesketh | Our friends | Southey, vi. 184 | 305 |
| 581 | Aug. 26 | Lady Hesketh and Thurlow | He who has | Southey, ii. 306 | 307 |
| 582 | Aug. 28 | Mrs. King | Should you | Southey, vi. 185 | 309 |
| 583 | Sept. 2 | Newton | I rejoice | Southey, xv. 206 | 311 |
| 584 | Sept. 11 | Rose | It gave me | S. vi. 187 (partially) | 314 |
| 585 | Sept. 13 | Lady Hesketh | Beau seems | Southey, vi. 189 | 316 |
| 586 | Sept. 20 | Johnson (book-seller) | My thanks | Unpublished | 318 |
| 587 | Sept. 25 | Rose | Say what | Southey, vi. 191 | 320 |
| 588 | Sept. 25 | Mrs. King | How surprised | Southey, vi. 193 | 321 |
| 589 | Oct. 11 | <i>Id.</i> | You are | Southey, vi. 195 | 323 |
| 590 | Oct. 30 | Rev. W. Bagot | The good | Southey, xv. 209 | 326 |
| 591 | Nov. 11 | Rose | Weston | S. vi. 192 (partially) | 328 |
| 592 | Nov. 29 | Newton | Not to fill | Southey, vi. 198 | 329 |
| 593 | Nov. 30 | Rose | Your letter | S. vi. 201 (partially) | 332 |
| 594 | Dec. 2 | Hill | I told | Southey, vi. 202 | 334 |
| 595 | Dec. 6 | Mrs. King | It must | Southey, vi. 203 | 334 |
| 596 | Dec. 9 | Newton | That I | S. xv. 211 (partially) | 337 |
| 597 | 1789, Dec. 20 | Robert Smith | Mrs. Unwin | Southey, vi. 206 | 339 |
| 598 | Jan. 19 | Rose | We are | Unpublished | 340 |
| 599 | Jan. 20 | <i>Id.</i> | I send you | Unpublished | 342 |
| 600 | Jan. 24 | <i>Id.</i> | We have | Southey, vi. 208 | 343 |
| 601 | Jan. 29 | Mrs. King | This morning | Southey, vi. 209 | 344 |
| 602 | Jan. 29 | Rev. W. Bagot | I shall | Southey, vi. 211 | 346 |
| 603 | Jan. 31 | Lady Hesketh | I have | Southey, vi. 212 | 346 |
| 604 | Feb. 4 | <i>Id.</i> | A letter | Southey, vi. 214 | 349 |
| 605 | Feb. 15 | <i>Id.</i> | Horace | Southey, vi. 218 | 352 |
| 606 | Feb. 19 | Rose | If I | S. vi. 207 (partially) | 355 |
| 607 | Feb. 25 | Lady Hesketh | You dislike | S. vi. 220 (partially) | 357 |
| 608 | Mar. 5 | <i>Id.</i> | Since I | Southey, vi. 222 | 360 |
| 609 | Mar. 6 | Bull | To travel | Southey, vi. 225 | 362 |
| 610 | Mar. 12 | Mrs. King | I feel | Southey, vi. 225 | 363 |
| 611 | Apr. 6 | Lady Hesketh | You received | Southey, vi. 227 | 365 |
| 612 | Apr. 14 | <i>Id.</i> | I threatened | Southey, vi. 230 | 367 |
| 613 | Apr. 20 | Rose | Since the | Unpublished | 370 |
| 614 | Apr. 22 | Mrs. King | Having | Southey, vi. 233 | 371 |

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| 616 | May 14 | Mrs. Throckmorton | I send you | Unpublished | 374 |
| 617 | May 20 | Rose | Finding | Southey, vi. 236 | 375 |
| 618 | May 30 | Mrs. King | Many thanks | Southey, vi. 238 | 377 |
| 619 | June 5 | Rose | I am going | S. vi. 239 (partially) | 378 |
| 620 | June 6 | Lady Hesketh | I know not | Southey, vi. 240 | 380 |
| 621 | June 13 | <i>Id.</i> | I steal | S. vi. 243 (partially) | 382 |
| 622 | June 16 | Rev. W. Bagot | You will | Southey, vi. 245 | 385 |
| 623 | June 20 | Rose | I am truly | S. vi. 246 (partially) | 386 |
| 624 | June 23 | Lady Hesketh | One more | Southey, vi. 247 | 387 |
| 625 | July 18 | Mrs. Throckmorton | You must | S. vi. 249 (partially) | 389 |
| 626 | July 23 | Rose | You do | S. vi. 250 (partially) | 392 |
| 627 | Aug. 1 | Mrs. King | The post | Southey, vi. 252 | 394 |
| 628 | Aug. 8 | Rose | Come when | Southey, vi. 254 | 396 |
| 629 | Aug. 12 | Hill | I rejoice | Southey, xv. 212 | 397 |
| 630 | Aug. 16 | Newton | Mrs. Newton | Southey, vi. 255 | 398 |
| 631 | Aug. 31 | Clot. Rowley | I have | Southey, vi. 257 | 400 |
| 632 | Sept. 24 | Rose | You left | Southey, vi. 260 | 403 |
| 633 | Oct. 4 | <i>Id.</i> | The hamper | Southey, vi. 261 | 403 |
| 634 | Nov. 5 | <i>Id.</i> | Recollecting | Unpublished | 404 |
| 635 | Nov. 22 | <i>Id.</i> | I thank | Unpublished | 407 |
| 636 | Dec. 1 | Newton | On this | Grimshawe, iv. 132 | 407 |
| 637 | Dec. 13 | Lady Hesketh | Unable | Southey, vi. 262 | 409 |
| 638 | Dec. 18 | Hill | The present | Southey, vi. 264 | 411 |
| 639 | ? | Rev. W. Bagot | I know | Southey, vi. 265 | 412 |
| 640 | ? | <i>Id.</i> | I am | Southey, vi. 266 | 413 |
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| 645 | Jan. 26 | <i>Id.</i> | My blunder | Southey, vi. 275 | 422 |
| 646 | Feb. 1 | Clot. Rowley | I shot | Southey, vi. 278 | 424 |
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| 650 | Feb. 11 | Johnson (book-seller) | I am | Southey, vi. 281 | 431 |
| 651 | Feb. 26 | Lady Hesketh | You have | Southey, vi. 283 | 432 |
| 652 | Feb. 27 | Mrs. Bodham | Whom I | Southey, ii. 325 | 434 |
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| 660 | Mar. 29 | Rev. Row. Hill | The moment | Southey, vi. 296 | 450 |
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| 662 | Apr. 19 | Lady Hesketh | I thank thee | Southey, vi. 299 | 452 |
| 663 | Apr. 30 | <i>Id.</i> | To my old | Southey, vi. 300 | 454 |

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| 667 | May 11 | Lady Hesketh | We have | Southey, vi. 304 | 457 |
| 668 | May 28 | <i>Id.</i> | I thank | Southey, vi. 306 | 460 |
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| 698 | Nov. 30 | Rose | I will | Southey, vi. 339 | 8 |
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| 707 | Jan. 20 | Newton | Had you | Southey, vi. 348 | 20 |
| 708 | Jan. 21 | John Johnson | I know | Southey, vi. 349 | 22 |
| 709 | Feb. 1 | Clot. Rowley | You must | Southey, vi. 350 | 23 |
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| 834 | June 6 | Lady Hesketh | If Hayley | Southey, vi. 121 | 219 |
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| 870 | Aug. 12 | Mrs. Courtenay | Though I | Southey, vii. 141 | 270 |
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| 887 | Sept. | Teedon | I thank you | Gauntlett, ii. 385 | 296 |

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| 892 | Oct. 7 | Teedon | I write | Gauntlett, ii. 360 | 302 |
| 893 | Oct. 13 | <i>Id.</i> | I would | Gauntlett, ii. 385 | 303 |
| 894 | Oct. 13 | Hayley | I began | S. vii. 156 (partially) | 304 |
| 895 | Oct. 14 | Mrs. King | Your kind | Southey, vii. 158 | 305 |
| 896 | Oct. 16 | Teedon | On Saturday | Gauntlett, ii. 360 | 307 |
| 897 | Oct. 18 | Newton | I thought | Southey, vii. 159 | 308 |
| 898 | Oct. 19 | John Johnson | You are | Southey, vii. 161 | 310 |
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| 906 | Nov. 8 | Teedon | By this time | Gauntlett, ii. 363 | 316 |
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| 917 | Dec. 1 | Lady Hesketh | I am truly | Southey, vii. 171 | 332 |
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| 920 | Dec. 7 | Hayley | Lady Hesketh | Unpublished | 338 |
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| 925 | Dec. 17 | Thomas Park | You are very | Southey, vii. 328 | 345 |
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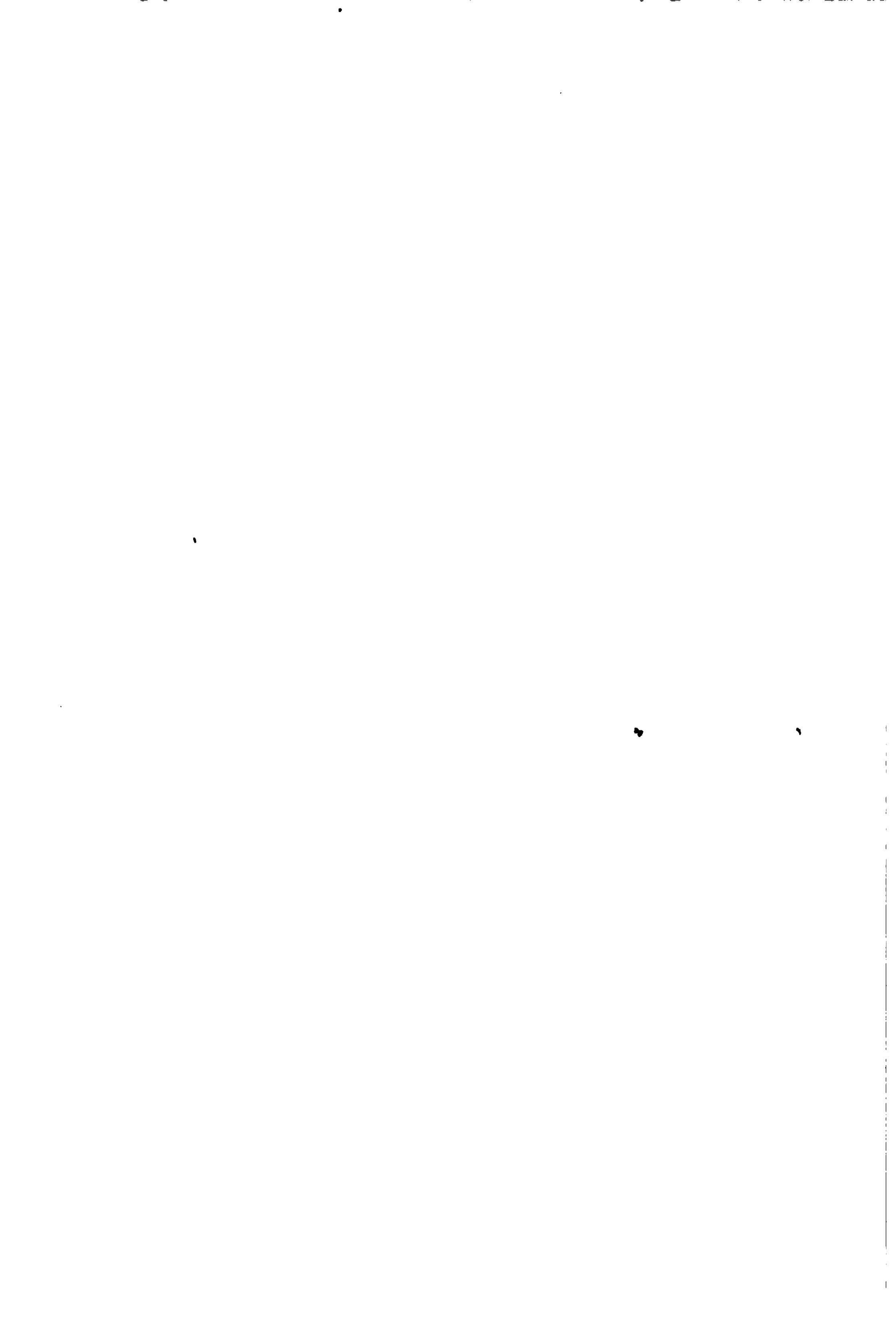
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